UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
3 1761 00592072 3

DIBDIN'S

HISTORY

OF THE

STAGE.

A

COMPLETE HISTORY

OF THE ENGLISH

STAGE.

WRITTEN BY

CHARLES

Mr. DIBDIN.

THE PLAYERS CANNOT KEEP COUNSEL; THEY'LL TELL ALL.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

AND SOLD BY HIM AT HIS WAREHOUSE, LEICESTER PLACE,

LEICESTER SQUARE.

PN
2101
D54
1800
v.2

681146
2.7 52

THE

STAGE.

BOOK III.

THE FRENCH THEATRE UP TO THE DEATH OF VOLTAIRE.

CHAP. I.

THE ORIGIN OF OPERA, AND ITS ESTABLISHMENT IN FRANCE.

We ſhall now find the affairs of the French theatre ſo blended with the ſerious and comic opera, and a variety of ſpectacles branching from thoſe exhibitions, that it will be neceſſary to give an account of their eſtabliſhment in France to make this deſcription of the drama in that country complete; and as it cannot be denied that muſic, taken as an embelliſhment, excites and ſatisfies curioſity in a more gratifying and delightful manner than any other dramatic amuſement, I ſhall beg the reader's patience for a few pages while I ſpeak of that bewitching art, in order to ſhew how opera originated,

and in what manner it eſtabliſhed itſelf in FRANCE and other countries.

It is impoſſible to trace the origin of muſic conſidered as a ſcience. In its literal and extended idea, which the ancients diſtinguiſhed by the term Harmonica, it was born with the world. The more we ſearch, either into holy writ, or into mythology, the more we ſhall be convinced that muſic made up the delight of all countries at all times*; nay, that it was the ſort of order that lent perfection to the chaos in which other ſciences were involved; and that was the reaſon, perhaps, the ancients gave to every art the appellation muſic.

The Egyptians inform us that muſic was invented immediately after the flood, and the idea of inſtruments, which naturally implies harmony, are by innumerable authors ſaid to have been of very early invention. MERCURY we are told found a tortoiſe ſhell and ſtretching cords acroſs it formed the lyre. LUCRETIUS ſays that wind inſtruments had their origin from the whiſtling of the wind among the ruſhes. AMPHION, CHIRON, DEMO-

* So early as the fourth chapter of Geneſis, we find JUBAL, who we are told was the father of all ſuch as handle the harp and organ; and if we go into mythology, have we not APOLLO the muſes and the muſic of the ſpheres?

DOCUS, HERMES TRISMEGISTUS, OLYMPUS, and ORPHEUS, are all reported to have been celebrated muſicians, and performers on muſical inſtruments; nay, to what perfection muſt this art have been brought at the time of the Grecian republic, if it be true that TERPANDER ſet the laws of LYCURGUS to muſic, that he was well acquainted with the modes, and that THALES, and THAMYRUS knew the nature of inſtrumental muſic without ſinging.

But the more we ſearch into this exquiſite and endleſs theme, the more we ſhall be bewildered with conjecture, though facts ſtare us in the face. A hoſt of writers on one ſide contend that the ancients alone knew how to render muſic facinating, and that the degree of perfection from which it derived that power to which ORPHEUS and others had brought it is loſt to the moderns; others contend that the ancients knew nothing of harmony, and one of them inſiſts that what is called harmony, or the doctrine of combined ſounds, was invented by GUIDO ARETINE, a benedictine friar.

Let us examine this. The ancients had inſtruments, and to talk of inſtruments without the idea of combined ſounds, is ridiculous and contemptible. It would be pedantry, and perhaps impertinence here, to ſpeak particularly of twelve or fourteen

ſtringed inſtruments among the ancients which were ſtruck either with the hand or a plectrum; of ſix or ſeven wind inſtruments, particularly the hydraulic organ, the very title of which explains the ingenuity of its conſtruction; and as many pulſatile inſtruments; it is enough to ſay that we know theſe inſtruments were at that time in uſe, and, therefore, that harmony, to its fulleſt extent, muſt have been known, for no one will be ſo abſurd as to ſuppoſe that this great variety of inſtruments were played on one at a time; but, if it had been ſo, does not every ſtringed inſtrument anſwer all the purpoſes of harmony?

Every adventitious accident, from whence proceeds ſucceſſive ſounds, even the creaking of a door, produces the effect of a chord, and therefore leads to combined ſounds. Two unconſcious watchmen ſhall cry the ſame hour in thirds, but this is obvious in a thouſand inſtances; and as to meaſure, the marching of ſoldiers, the ringing of bells, the forging an anchor, and the galloping of an horſe, will give you all the varieties of common and tripple time. The words

> "From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
> "The univerſal frame began,"

came from the truly lyric ſoul of DRYDEN; and a lovely and a delicious truth it is. The divine and

exquiſite beauty of order is muſic, of which melody is like the ſun that cheers the univerſe, and harmony like creation itſelf that exults and rejoices under its celeſtial influence.

If it be meant, as ſome warmly contend, that the ancients in their choruſes had but one ſong, and though there were a variety of voices each diſtinct voice ſung the ſame individual melody, it does not alter the caſe. Did the lyre, the pſalterium, the tibia, the cornuus, the tympanum, the tintinnabulum, did theſe join the voices in playing the ſame ſong, the ſame individual melody? 'Tis impoſſible. Some of theſe inſtruments, out of many others then in uſe, were incapable of it; their contracted ſcale would not admit of it. No; it was an accompanyment, a dreſs to adorn the melody; which, like the decoration of beauty, by diſguiſing ſome parts, gave to thoſe that were diſcerned a ſuperior degree of lovelineſs.

I'll put this fact in an incontrovertible light. A large congregation ſhall ſing the hundreth Pſalm; and though there is the difference of an octave in the voices of men from the voices of women and children, yet they will ſing the ſame diſtinct individual melody; and a moſt delightful melody it is. What follows? They are accompanied by an organ

which combines all thoſe harmonious principles we have been ſpeaking of, the full organ even to abſtruſeneſs. What does it ſignify then whether the voices ſing the ſame melody, or ſing in parts? By the introduction of this accompanyment is not the concert full and complete? And, this admitted, who ſhall ſay that the ancients were ſtrangers to harmony in muſic.

I ſhould think it very probable that their muſic was like their writings, grand, natural, and impreſſive; and, if ſo, by uſing leſs complication, they delighted not ſurprized the mind, and therefore the ſimplicity of their harmony, by anſwering all the beſt purpoſes of muſic, ſurpaſſed the inexplicable and diſtracting ſyſtem of modern harmoniſts.

Theſe and a thouſand other reaſons incline us to believe that dramatic entertainments were invented through the medium of muſic. Dithyrambics were, as we have ſeen, actually ſung by one perſon, and we may go further and ſay that HOMER, HESIOD, and all the ancient poets ſung their ſongs of what nature ſoever for the amuſement of the public *.

* HESIOD by way of an inſtrument uſed to accompany his voice with a ſwitch, or bundle of rods, which by being ſmartly twitched with the hand produced a ſort of whiſtling ſound. I think this inſtrument might be applied to ſome of our modern ſingers with very good effect.

This admitted, ſomething as much in the nature of opera as other dramatic entertainments were in the nature of plays, certainly made at all times a part of the amuſements of the theatre; and that ſoſtenuto for which LULLY has been ſo greatly admired, and which, I dare ſay, was dull enough, was clearly that ſuſtained ſleepy declamatory effect ſo often complained of in the choruſes of the ancients.

Opera, however, being in its capability more extraneous and leſs natural as a vehicle to convey regular and probable action, was longer than any other ſpecies of dramatic production before it took a tone and a form ſo as to be claſſed ſeparately and diſtinct from other ſtage repreſentations; and it is very probable, though the regular opera had often been attempted, it never would have become any thing more than a vehicle for the introduction of dances and decorations, had it not found a ſort of ÆSCHYLUS in METATASIO.

JOHANNES SULPITIUS, a native of VEROLI, is ſaid to have exhibited operas in the fifteenth century; and we are told that EMILIO CAVALIERE, in 1590, exhibited two dramas, ſet to muſic, in the Palace of the Grand Duke of FLORENCE. We hear alſo of OCTAVIO RINUCCINI who brought an opera on the theatre at FLORENCE, in 1633, in

honour of the marriage of MARY de MEDICIS with HENRY the fourth of FRANCE.

We have seen by VOLTAIRE's account how opera came to be introduced into FRANCE. I shall, therefore, now proceed to relate some particulars of LULLY who presided so long at the head of that entertainment. LULLY was born at FLORENCE in 1633, and died in PARIS in 1687. Being an excellent performer on the violin, he was invited to FRANCE, where he became superintendant of the king's band, and by address and cunning soon introduced himself into all companies. His will was a fiat, not only as to music but almost as to every thing else, though he was very little more than an arrogant pretending buffoon *.

In speaking of the opera, it will be generally

* A French writer under the idea of a letter received from the Elysian Fields, gives the following description of LULLY: Upon a sort of litter composed of ordure and rotten laurels, appeared carried by twelve satyrs, a little slovenly ill looking man. He had small red eyes, which could scarcely be seen, and out of which he could scarcely see. They emitted, however, a sort of cloudy fire, in which could be discovered a mixture of shrewdness and malignity. His exterior was all gaiety, but it was perpetually checked with inward inquietude. To servility, buffoonery, and obscenity, he joined arrogance, pride, and presumption; and I was not astonished, upon enquiring who this puffed up manikin could be, to learn that he was nothing more than a drunken fidler.

neceſſary to aſſociate the names of QUINAULT and LULLY. In 1673, they brought out *Cadmus*, which was performed *au Jeu de paulme de Bel Air*; but LULLY, ever attentive to his intereſt, no ſooner heard of MOLIERE's death than he ſet every engine to work to procure a grant from the king of MOLIERE's theatre. This with very little difficulty he obtained, and *Cadmus* was the firſt opera brought out on the theatre of the Palais Royal *, though ſome contend that *Alceſte* was the firſt, which appeared in 1674. This, however, is not probable, or if it were, it is hardly worth enquiring into.

Theſée came out in 1675; and on the following

* Thus there had been three regular theatres:—one at the *Hotel de Bourgogne*, one at *Du Marais*, and one at the *Palais Royal*; and they continued to perform upon ſeparate foundations until the death of MOLIERE, which happened in February 1673. This company, who could not ſupport themſelves after the death of their chief, divided, and by incorporating themſelves into the other two companies, gave them great additional ſtrength. The theatre *au Marais* ſoon afterwards quitted that ſituation, and opened a new houſe in *La Rue Mazarine*, where the king ſent all the ſcenes and decorations which MOLIERE had uſed in the *Palais Royal*, being ſituated oppoſite *la rue Guenegaud*. This houſe was callad the theatre *de Guenegaud*. On the twenty-firſt of October, however, 1680, the king united the two companies, fixed himſelf the number of actors, allotted their different ſhares of the profits, according to their reſpective merits, diſcharged ſome, gave others penſions, and regulated the whole economy of this new ſociety, who were beſides gratified out of his privy purſe with a penſion of twelve thouſand livres.

year *Atys*, one of the moſt celebrated operas of theſe aſſociates, in which there is certainly ſome beautiful lyric writing *. This piece had aſtoniſhing ſucceſs. It was, however, according to cuſtom bitterly attacked by DESPREAUX, of whoſe judgment, as a critic, I cannot give a better proof than that which follows: When this ſatyriſt went to the repreſentation of this opera at VERSAILLES, "put me," ſaid he, "in ſome corner where it will be impoſſible for "me to hear the words. I admire the muſic of "LULLY, but I have a ſovereign contempt for the "verſes of QUINAULT †.

Iſis followed *Atys* in 1677, and *Proſerpine* in 1680, but *Perſée* which came out in 1682, was one of the moſt famous operas produced by theſe allies. CORNEILLE, however, had treated the ſame ſubject in a piece called *Andromede*. A number of fortunate circumſtances combined to aſſiſt the ſucceſs of this piece. Among the reſt the audience were moſt agreeably ſurpriſed to ſee the young prince DEITRICHTEIN, the eldeſt ſon of the prince of that name, grand maſter of his imperial majeſty, dance

* LOUIS the fourteenth aſked Madame MAINTENON which of all the operas ſhe liked beſt. She anſwered *Atys*. "*Atys*, Madam," ſaid he, "is too happy."

† Incomparable critic! Admire muſic compoſed on purpoſe to give force and expreſſion to thoſe words which he held in contempt.

with an elegance and a grace which gave univerſal aſtoniſhment. He appeared on the theatre maſked, as was then the cuſtom, and took alternately the ſituation of all the principal dancers.

The concourſe of people who flocked to ſee this prince was incredible, and what renders the circumſtance ſtill more wonderful is, that though he excelled every other dancer, he had not been taught more than a year.

The king had this opera performed in an *orangerie*, where the diſpoſition of real trees, a fountain, and other natural objects, curiouſly and judiciouſly arranged gave a moſt delicious effect to the ſpectacle.

All the beauties of the court were invited, and every poſſible care taken and expence laviſhed to ſhew the merit of the poet and compoſer to advantage; all which merit LULLY, as uſual, took to himſelf, and received the compliments of the king and the nobility, while the humble QUINAULT ſtood at a diſtance, as little noticed as if he had been an indifferent ſpectator. The words of the king to LULLY were, "that he had never ſeen "a piece where the muſic was ſo equally good "throughout."

The very ſame year a brilliant *fete* was given to celebrate the birth of the Duke of BURGUNDY. LULLY, upon this occaſion gave *Perſeus* gratis, and prevailed upon QUINAULT to introduce a great deal of novelty applicable to the event in honour of which the opera was performed; beſides which he put himſelf to a prodigious expence. He had a triumphal arch, a firework, and a fixed ſun of an aſtoniſhing magnitude, containing ſeveral thouſand lamps; after which there was a diſcharge of muſketry, and, to finiſh all, a fountain that ran with wine, Who, after this, could deny that *Perſeus* was the ſole production of LULLY?

Nor were theſe adventitious circumſtances all that gave advantage to *Perſeus;* it begat a ſpirited controverſy, which the ladies very warmly entered into, and inſiſted that *Pheneus's* expreſſion that he would rather ſee ANDROMEDA devoured by the monſter, than in the arms of his rival, was void of gallantry, and therefore ought not to be uttered on the ſtage.

This diſpute was ſo followed up that all the public prints of the times were full of it. No wonder then that an opera, ſo much praiſed and condemned, ſhould be the conſtant topic, and that therefore, either through prejudice, or partiality—motives

equally advantageous—all PARIS made a point of attending it.

After *Perſée* came *Phaeton*, in 1683; *Amadis de Gaule*, in 1684; *Le Temple de la Paix*, in 1685; *Roland*, alſo in 1685; and *Armide*, in 1686. Immediately after the production of this laſt opera, QUINAULT, heartily tired of LULLY, retired from the theatre.

It may truly be ſaid, that though the enthuſiaſm cauſed by the muſic of LULLY aroſe from no other reaſon than that muſic had till that time in FRANCE been of the moſt contemptible kind; yet he merits a large ſhare of praiſe for reducing it to a ſort of ſtandard, which proved a good ground work for the improvements afterwards made in it by RAMEAU and others. But none of this would have been effected had not QUINAULT ſtarted up the only French poet, in ſpight of the ill nature and the ignorance of BOILEAU, who poſſeſſed a true genius for this ſpecies of lyric poetry.

Theſe men led very different lives; and while QUINAULT lived honoured and reſpected, and died lamented and regretted, LULLY was laughed at and deſpiſed in his life time, and deteſted and execrated after his death *.

* The death of LULLY was cauſed by an accident. He com.

Among the operas of QUINAULT and LULLY, it was ſaid that *Atys* was the opera for the king, *Armide*, for the ladies, *Phaeton* for the public in general, and *Iſis* for muſicians.

Many other operas, written by QUINAULT, and compoſed by LULLY, were performed with various

---

poſed a *Te Deum* on the recovery of the king; and, in the heighth of his enthuſiaſm, beating time very violently with his cane, he ſtruck it forcibly againſt his foot, and his frame being at all times, from his debaucheries, in a corrupt and diſeaſed ſtate, a gangrene enſued which carried him off.

Among other inſtances of LULLY's total want of principle and morality, we are told that fancying himſelf in extremity he ſent for a confeſſor, who informed him he had no chance of being ſaved unleſs he threw his laſt opera in the fire. This he inſtantly complied with; but getting apparently better, and being reproached by one of the princes, who came to ſee him, with having burnt his opera, "Oh," ſaid he, "I was not ſuch a fool in that buſineſs as you imagine. I "knew what I was about. I have a copy and ſo the prieſt was "cheated." He grew worſe however; and finding his death approach he not only burnt his reſerved copy, but ſubmitted himſelf to be laid upon a heap of aſhes with a halter round his neck, and to expiate his offence, as he imagined, ſung to one of his own airs theſe words, "*Il faut mourir, pecheur, Il faut mourir.*"

While he was ill, the Chevalier de LORRAINE came to ſee him, and in an affectionate way lamented his ſituation, and made him a thouſand proteſtations of friendſhip. Oh yes, truly, ſaid the wife of LULLY, you are a very kind friend to him! It was you who made him drunk the laſt, and will be the cauſe of his death. "Hold your "tongue," ſaid LULLY, "'tis very kind of the Chevalier. He "was the laſt that made me drunk, and in return he ſhall be the firſt "that I'll make drunk if I eſcape this illneſs."

ſucceſs *. At length many of the beſt authors adventured in this ſpecies of writing, and MOLIERE, QUINAULT, PIERRE, and T. CORNEILLE wrote *Pſyche* in conjunction; and there is another *Pſyche*, which has been pretty generally given to FONTENELLE. At length, when the opera became more eſtabliſhed, and RAMEAU was the favourite compoſer †, the beſt geniuſes wrote for that ſpectacle; nay even VOLTAIRE was tempted to adventure in it, and thereby undertook what he himſelf confeſſes he did not underſtand. His *Temple de Gloire*, an entertainment of this kind, not ſucceeding, he aſked an Abbe of his acquaintance how he liked it. The Abbe an-

---

* LULLY the father having had ſuch ſucceſs, LULLY the ſon attempted to profit by the family reputation.—Finding, however, no QUINAULT who would permit him to ſpoil his pieces, the only opera he ever attempted, which was called *Orpheus*, and written by BOULAY, drew on him in deriſion an epigram, a rondeau, and a ſong; for he had ſuch influence that the audience were forbid by the court to hiſs, therefore they were obliged to damn *Orpheus* through the medium of the newſpapers.

† RAMEAU found it very difficult to eſtabliſh a muſical reputation. The French had been ſo uſed to the monotony of LULLY, that they had no reliſh for the diverſity of RAMEAU. Thus it happened that he was obliged to compoſe what words he could get. One of his firſt attempts was an opera by an anonymous author called *Paladins*. One of the ſongs was ſet to ſuch quick muſic that the words could not be heard.—The ſinger complained of this. RAMEAU replied he did it out of kindneſs to the author, for that in rendering the words unintelligible, he had acted towards him with the greateſt friendſhip.

ſwered he had been at the temple of glory, but the lady did not happen to be at home.

In anſwer to a friend, whoſe ſentiments were ſomething ſimilar to the above, VOLTAIRE ſays, "I ſee I have done a very fooliſh thing in writing "an opera, but the pleaſure of working for ſuch a "man as RAMEAU hurried me out of all prudence. "In conſidering the extent of his genius, I forgot "how much my own was circumſcribed, for I now "find, if I have any, it is not calculated for the lyric "ſtyle, and I plainly ſee I could write an epic "poem with more eaſe than I could *fill a canvaſs*. "Not that I by any means hold this art in con-"tempt; on the contrary, I hold it to be a very re-"ſpectable ſpecies of writing, but I now fairly ſee "that I ſhall never have a talent for it."

CHAP. II.

ITALIAN THEATRE.

As the Italian theatre, as it always has been called, will hereafter make up a conſiderable part of French dramatic exhibitions, it will be extremely proper in in this place to give ſome account of it, and alſo of all thoſe inferior dramatic objects which branched out from that ſtrange heterogeneous amuſement which, like our opera, was originally performed in a language the natives did not underſtand. Nay till very lately the love ſcenes, in ſome of thoſe comedies, have been occaſionally performed in Italian. In 1577, a troop of Italian comedians called *Le Geloſi*, performed at the *Hotel de Bourbon*, but they had no fixed eſtabliſhment, and after ſome years they were replaced by another, who, in their turn, were ſuppreſſed in 1662. It was after this that an Italian troop were permitted to perform alternately with the troop of MOLIERE *au petit Bourbon*, where they continued till 1697, when the king thought proper to ſhut up their theatre.

The variety of difficulties the Italian comedians laboured under to procure leave for their performances, obliged them to exhauſt invention for expedients to combat the laws then in force. The firſt of theſe expedients was an attempt to evade an accuſation of performing regular pieces. This they effected by taking an outline of the plot of the piece, together with all the nicer immediate circumſtances; and having got this perfectly by heart, to ſupply the dialogue extempore. By this means the ſame ſcene was never literally performed twice alike, eſpecially as they frequently changed parts with each other*.

Notwithſtanding this and other expedients, the Italian theatre was ſhut up for nineteen years, and after this they were ſo diſperſed that it was not expected they would ever again rally in FRANCE. The Duc D'ORLEANS, however, at that time

* Theſe pieces were the invention of the two RICOBONIES, father and ſon, and, to ſay truth, they poſſeſſed one very extraordinary merit. The words coming from the actors extemporaneouſly, they had a vivacity, a glow, a fire, unknown to thoſe dialogues which are ſtudied. This however was not new for it had been done in Spain. The comedians who compoſed this troop were almoſt all authors, and through a lively and fertile imagination, they filled their parts with uncommon eclat. The contrary, however, was too often the caſe, for it is eaſily ſeen that a ſingle novice might diſconcert the moſt ingenious effuſions of imagination.

Regent, ſent for others, who arrived in PARIS in 1716. He gave inſtructions to M. ROUILLE, *Counſeiller d' Etat*, to procure the beſt performers from ITALY. It will eaſily be believed the taſk was not difficult. Indeed with ſuch alacrity did they pour in from all quarters, that the company was very ſoon complete, and the regent, till the *Hotel de Bourgogne* could be got ready, permitted them to perform at the *Palais Royal* on ſuch days as there was no opera.

On the eighteenth of May, 1716, they opened their theatre with a piece called *L'Heureuſe Surprize*, and on the twentieth of the ſame month their eſtabliſhment was announced by an order from the king. The firſt day of the following June they took poſſeſſion of the theatre of the *Hotel de Bourgogne*, under the title of the comedians in ordinary to his Royal Highneſs Monſieigneur le Duc D'ORLEANS, Regent, and that prince dying, on the ſecond of December, 1723, the company obtained the title of the KING's *Italian comedians in ordinary*, with a penſion of fifteen thouſand livres. This obtained, they put the king's arms upon the *Hotel de Bourgogne*, and above it, in black marble, this inſcription in letters of gold.

HOTEL *des comediens Italiens ordinaires du Roi*,

entretenus par ſa Majéſté rétablis a Paris en l'annee M,DCC,XVI.

The theatres that were erected at the Fairs, *St. Germain*, and *St. Laurent*, though an inferior kind, were nevertheleſs productive of great improvement in dramatic humour; and alſo bringing forward actors and actreſſes of great and particular merit. Engliſh travellers at that time flocked with pleaſure to ſee the buffoon and groteſque acting of DOMINIQUE in *Harlequin*, the ſimple and *naive* deportment of BELLONI in *Pierrot*, the humour and *fineſſe* of Madamoiſelle de LISLE in the waiting maids, the pleaſant awkwardneſs of DESGRANGES in *Scaramouch*, the ſingular figure of PAGHETTI, in old men, and the noble and modeſt air of Madamoiſelle MOLIN, in the characters of wards and daughters.

In all countries the beſt writers have been, at different times, ill treated by managers. LE SAGE, D'ORNEVAL, PANNARD, PIRON, and BOISSY led the way for almoſt a total deſertion of the theatre, in favour of the fair; which boaſted at length the added names of FAVARD, ANSEAUME, DOMINIQUE, LE GRAND, FAGAN, DELAFOND, PONTAU, VADE, and SEDAINE. The trifles they produced being excellent in their kind, and in a ſtyle perfectly different from the general run of dramatic

entertainments, and alſo produced by ſome of the beſt writers, made the fairs, for forty years, the firſt object of amuſement in FRANCE.

The theatres feeling ſeverely the effect of their own inferiority, were obliged to have recourſe to a number of expedients, if not to ſuppreſs the pieces performed at the fair, at leaſt to leſſen their value. For this purpoſe they were perpetually teaſing the magiſtrates, who, at different times, upon being properly applied to, iſſued ſeveral mandates to forbid ſuch parts of the performances as were moſt likely to be applauded*.

This only ſerved to ſtimulate their exertions, and to rouſe them to freſh ingenuity. Being forbidden to perform in dialogue, they were, for ſome ſhort time, reduced to exhibit every thing by geſture, through which they ſeverely and ſucceſsfully ridiculed their enemies. They could not hope, however, to perform long in this manner to any great advantage; and, therefore, applied to the ſydnics

* Upon one of theſe occaſions muſic was abſolutely forbidden; in conſequence of this they were obliged to ſupply what they could, in which they were generally, by implication, pretty ſevere on their oppreſſors. One night in the middle of a ſcene an aſs was heard to bray—"Hold your tongue," ſaid Harlequin, "you'll bring us into "a ſcrape. Don't you know we are forbid to have muſic."

and the doctors of the royal academy of muſicians, who permitted them to perform ſhort pieces, partly dialogue, and partly ſongs, and occaſionally aſſiſted by dances.—Theſe ſpectacles were called the Comic Opera, of which ſpecies of amuſement the admirable author of *Gil Blas* may be conſidered as the father.

Flattered with the great ſucceſs he had met with on the ſtage, and irritated with the avarice and folly of the managers, he devoted himſelf entirely to this ſlighter ſpecies of dramatic employment. Many of his pieces were in great meaſure written from motives of revenge, and ſuch were generally parodies of the new tragedies, which no ſooner appeared on the theatre, than they were humouroufly and ſucceſsfully ridiculed at the fair. The beſt authors ſmarted, and moſt ſeverely too, under this teaſing rod of criticiſm. Among the reſt, Mr. VOLTAIRE, in the buſineſs of his *Semiramis*, certainly felt it with the greateſt keenneſs*.

* VOLTAIRE was diſtreſſed beyond meaſure leſt his *Semiramis* ſhould be parodied. He wrote a letter to the queen, where he ſays, "as he is ſure ſhe has no farther intention in ſanctioning the ſtage by "her auguſt preſence than to countenance only decency and decorum, "he conjures her, with the moſt *lively grief*, not to ſuffer a violation "of decency, in permitting a ſatire againſt him. That the tragedy "of *Semiramis* is founded from one end to the other upon a ſubject

Theſe comic writers, however, drew on themſelves, by the ſeverity of their ſatires, a hoſt of enemies, and were forbid to perform any pieces in which there was either ſpeaking or ſinging. This only convinced the world that they were complete adepts in their buſineſs; for, immediately ſetting their wits to work, they invented a ſpecies of amuſe-

---

" the moſt pure and moral, and from that circumſtance it demands " her protection. Deign," ſays he, " to conſider that I am the king's " domeſtic, and conſequently yours. My colleagues, who are gen- " tlemen in ordinary to the king, of whom many are employed in " other courts, and many poſſeſs the moſt honourable ſituations, " will find themſelves diſgraced by this inſult, and will deprive me " of my charge, and humble me in the eyes of the royal family, if " I am forced to ſubmit to this cruel humiliation. I conjure your " majeſty, by your goodneſs of heart, by the greatneſs and liberality " of your mind, by your piety, not to deliver me thus to my hidden " and overt enemies, who after loading me with a thouſand oppro- " brious outrages, would deſtroy me, by making me a public laugh- " ing ſtock.

" Deign to conſider that theſe parodies have been long ſince le- " gally forbidden. Muſt they then be revived ſolely to my injury? " and will your majeſty ſuffer it? No, Madam; your heart is too " juſt not to be moved by my wretchedneſs and my prayers, nor will " you ſuffer an old ſervant to die with grief and ſhame. Let me " hope then your humanity will be touched with my ſorrowful caſe, " and as in painting you I paint virtue itſelf, let me hope that virtue " will be my protection."

Without a comment, I give this as genuine from VOLTAIRE, who pretended to laugh at the malice of all the world.

ment which, from its extraordinary novelty, had the greateſt ſucceſs. It was written in the ſtrongeſt manner, and thus performed:

Two actors came on the ſtage with as many rolls of parchment as there were ſpeeches in the ſcene they were to perform. Theſe rolls were numbered, and on each written in large characters, what they had to ſay. Theſe they alternately diſplayed, which, being read by the audience, exhibited, in very laconic terms, ſome witty colloquy, eſpecially as theſe writings in great meaſure conſiſted of humorous apologies for their being under the neceſſity of having recourſe to ſo incomplete an expedient.

When the audience had ſeen enough of this viſual dialogue, large rolls of canvas were ſo diſplayed by two figures of boys, who ſeemed playing in the air, that the ſpectators could completely read the words of a ſong. As ſoon as it became completely viſible, the orcheſtra began a well known air, which ſome actor, placed either in the *parterre*, or the boxes, began to ſing. The audience ſoon took the hint, and after a time it was no uncommon thing for the whole of the ſpectators to join in every chorus.

The matter was, in proportion to the ſingularity

of the exigence, moſt wonderfully managed; but, after all, it is very evident that they laboured under the greateſt diſadvantages; and, at length, by the eſtabliſhment of the regular Italian comedians in 1716, who were joined by ſome of the beſt performers at the fair, this memorable era of humour and pleaſantry on the French ſtage, became apparently extinct; but it, however, left ſuch traces of real humour, fertile imagination and happy ſatire, that there has been ſcarcely a comic opera written ſince in FRANCE, that has not kept in view the ſpecies of intrigue invented by this extraordinary ſet of ingenious men *.

Before we quit the ſubject of the fair, it is proper to ſay it began with puppets. After this appeared wild beaſts, but it is curious to remark that a lion or a tiger was not conſidered as the ſmalleſt

* Even after the Italian theatre had been eſtabliſhed in 1716, it laboured under difficulties; for, growing into faſhion, the French actors complained that the Italians ſhould perform in any other than their own language. This complaint was carried to the king, who deſired to hear both parties. BARON, in the name of the French actors, ſpoke firſt. This done the king made a ſign to DOMINIQUE, the Harlequin, to ſpeak in his turn. "In what language may it pleaſe your majeſty am I to ſpeak?" ſaid DOMINIQUE. "In any language you will," ſaid the king. "Oh!" ſaid the Harlequin, "if that's the caſe I have won my cauſe." The king would not recal his word, and after that time the Italians continued to perform without interruption.

rarity, if he could not perform ſome comical tricks. After theſe came giants who muſt alſo be buffoons, otherwiſe they had no attention paid them. On this account, the common animals which we ſee every day were the greateſt favourites. Dogs, cats, and monkies, did more than the beſt actors and actreſſes that ever appeared, and theſe for a time were put out of countenance by ſlight-of-hand men, tumblers, and rope-dancers.

It muſt, however, be remembered, to the honour of the fair, that it gave birth to the moſt elegant dancing in FRANCE. Madmoiſelle de LISLE, who joined the moſt refined taſte and execution in ſerious dancing to the moſt charming ſprightlineſs in demi-character, and the ſtrongeſt conception and diſcrimination in dances of character and expreſſion, may be reckoned among the earlieſt proofs that the French were born eminently to rival all other nations in that accompliſhed—I will not, however, here ſay how far uſeful—art.

Madmoiſelle SALLE, who cauſed ſo long the admiration of PARIS, and at length retired with the applauſe of her country, was alſo an *Eleve* at the fair. Madmoiſelle RABON, that very celebrated dancer, was alſo bred up at the fair; and as for ſingers, it was the nurſery of the theatre.

Among other dancers who performed with great celebrity at the fair, was the father of our famous GRIMALDI. He had then juſt fled from ITALY. He was called, for diſtinction, *Iron Legs;* and ſuppoſed to be the beſt jumper in the world: for even the taſte of FRANCE, in its own proper profeſſion has been at times vitiated. He once jumped ſo high that he broke a chandelier; a piece of which hitting the Turkiſh ambaſſador, who was in the ſtage box, he conſidered this conduct as a premeditated affront, and complained to the French court of the outrage. But the moſt extraordinary circumſtance concerning him was his being put in priſon for indecency on the FRENCH STAGE, which is a circumſtance, when we conſider the licence uſed there, moſt peculiarly extraordinary.

The French were certainly for a time infatuated with GRIMALDI, but after the unlucky buſineſs of his impriſonment for indecency*, he began

---

* I copy the following circumſtance from a French author. "Iron Legs had for a partner either his wife, his ſiſter, or his daughter; for ſo equivocal was the lady's character that no one has been "able to aſcertain the preciſe degree of relationſhip. This nymph "was thought to be his ſiſter or daughter, for ſhe was remarkably "like him; being a ſquat, thick, ſtrong figure, and endowed with "ſo much agility and ſtrength that ſhe could break chandeliers al- "moſt as well as himſelf. Thus, as it was well known ſhe coha-

to lose ground, and at length was obliged to stroll into FLANDERS, where, however, he proved a source of riches to his confederates, for the Flanderkins, as he added legerdemain and other tricks to his jumping, thought him some supernatural being*.

" bited with him as his wife, the remainder of the conjecture— " his character being pretty well authenticated—became more " probable."

* When GRIMALDI was obliged to decamp into FLANDERS, he and his troop were attacked near BRUSSELS by a banditti. The baggage waggon was ransacked, their pockets turned inside out, and, according to their usual custom, the thieves were about to dispatch their prey. It should be known that GRIMALDI wanting money for his expedition, enticed one FLAHAUT, a bookseller, to follow his fortunes. FLAHAUT, having learnt Latin, took it into his head that it would be a good thing to introduce the ancient chorus on the stage, by way of explaining GRIMALDI's dances. GRIMALDI appeared to approve the scheme, but told him as it was a kind of improvement that could only be brought about by degrees, he had better learn to dance first, which would make him immediately useful. FLAHAUT set to work, and GRIMALDI promised to make him a capital dancer. In the end, he got as much money together as he could, left his family, and, as I said, followed GRIMALDI. When the sabres of the banditti were drawn to dispatch the troop of dancers, GRIMALDI, who at the danger of his life would have his joke, whispered FLAHAUT to talk Latin to them.—The enthusiast, FLAHAUT, began; and for a few seconds the sabres were suspended. Presently loudly vociferating *dixi*, one of them aiming a blow at his head, cried *feci*; which blow, had it taken place, must have silenced the orator for ever. But the most extraordinary part of the adventure remains to be told. GRIMALDI's partner, the lady before commemorated, in all the fervor of romantic heroism, just as the word dispatch had been

I have ſaid that the regular Italian comedy was re-eſtabliſhed in 1716. Such an impreſſion, however, the performances at the fair made, that the Italians on their return were, for a time, obliged to perform on that very ſpot, in order to give an original colour to their repreſentations; and thus, by degrees, they ſtole on the notice of the public, who, ſuch is the force of cuſtom, reliſhed thoſe amuſements no where but at the place they were originally given.

The circumſtance of performing the pieces of the fair aroſe from this: When firſt this troop began to be eſtabliſhed at PARIS, they performed nothing but pieces entirely Italian. The ladies who

uttered, ſtept forward, and, in a ſcream of deſpair, implored the banditti to have pity on her comrades; offering that if they would be merciful, ſhe would yield herſelf up a ſacrifice, and devote herſelf to their pleaſure. She deſcribed how many ways ſhe could be uſeful to them; that ſhe could dance to amuſe them, ſhe could cook for them, and, to be brief, intimated, in the language of DEBORAH WOODCOCK, that ſhe had no objection to any work they could put her to. In ſhort, the thieves were appeaſed, and carried off the lady in triumph, but not till they had ſtript the whole troop ſtark naked, leaving them nothing but the refuſe of what they had pillaged from baggage waggon, conſiſting of a few odds and ends of pantomime dreſſes. GRIMALDI put on an old Harlequin's jacket, poor FLAHAUT contented himſelf with the trowſers of Scaramouch, and in this plight they begged their way to BRUSSELS.

did not underſtand that language, no longer frequented the theatre. The gentlemen finding themſelves deſerted by the ladies, and thus the great channel of gallantry ſtagnated, alſo kept away. Seeing this, the Italians had recourſe to the pieces anciently performed at the Italian theatre, which were a jumble of half Italian and half French. What had formerly pleaſed, however, was no longer reliſhed, and they were, at one time, upon the point of returning to ITALY. What follows is the ſubſtance of a ſpeech ſpoken by Harlequin to the audience.

" Ladies and Gentlemen, they make me play " all ſorts of parts, and I know many of them ought " to diſguſt you. I hope, however, that which I " attempt at preſent will have the contrary effect; " though I confeſs a Harlequin may be expected " to move your laughter rather than your pity. But " novelty does much on the ſtage, and I truſt, " when you ſee a kneeling Scaramouch, a weeping " Colombine, and an imploring Pantaloon, you " will forget their aſſumed characters, and conſider " them as ſo many ſtrangers appealing to your com- " paſſion.

" You will be pleaſed to take into your conſi- " deration that, in coming to FRANCE, we had to

" combat new manners, a new language, and a new
" ſpecies of entertainment. In ſhort, we have only
" yet been at ſchool, and the public have very pro-
" perly kept away from us, till we made ourſelves
" perfect. The ladies, without whom the beſt elo-
" quence languiſhes and dies, have withdrawn from
" us their ſupport, and how can we expect any men
" of gallantry to attend us?

" The pieces we have performed were taſted
" formerly; but it was folly to ſuppoſe that what
" delighted a barbarous age ſhould pleaſe an en-
" lightened one. We mean, therefore, to abandon
" them, to ſubſtitute others more to your taſte,
" and, as the public are always equitable, we fear
" not your indulgence ſo much as our own ina-
" bility. What little merit we have ſhall be ſtre-
" nuouſly exerted to give you pleaſure; in the
" mean time, we are producing every day in our
" children young actors and actreſſes, who, though
" they inherit Italian abilities, are yet natives of
" FRANCE, and may perfect the celebrity of the
" theatre; all which advantages would be loſt if we
" were compelled to go to our own country.

" Deign, therefore, to conſider, at preſent, our
" intentions, that hereafter you may applaud our
" merits. Hitherto you have been indulgent at

" the expence of your juſtice; hereafter we flatter " ourſelves that applauſe will be ſanctioned by " propriety."

This ſpeech had the deſired effect; the public intereſted themſelves in the affairs of the comedians, and ſome of the beſt authors having adviſed them to perform the moſt celebrated among the pieces given at the fair, they very ſoon got into reputation. At length, many writers of eminence lent their aſſiſtance, and their children, as they had predicted, grew up, and were moſt accompliſhed actors. Indeed the reputation of the Italian theatre eclipſed that of the French, to which St. Foix, Marivaux, and other eminent authors did not a little contribute.

A circumſtance which happened about this time went a great way towards eſtabliſhing the reputation of the Italian theatre at Paris. The convaleſcence of the king. after a dangerous illneſs, gave occaſion for every exertion of loyalty throughout the kingdom; but the ſpirit of the Italians was very remarkable; they erected a moſt magnificent tranſparency before the *Facade* of their theatre; they built up a temporary ſtage on the balcony over it, whence their band did not ceaſe to play, or their troop to dance, during the greateſt part of the night; and as the whole tendency of their performance was to com-

pliment the king, and congratulate the people on his recovery, as many as could be collected on the ſpot joined their ſhouts of *Vive le Roi* in time to the muſic, as often as it was introduced; and that their mirth might not want an incentive, ciſterns of wine were placed in a convenient manner, to ſupply the populace.

On the day that *Te Deum* was ſung at *Notre Dame*, the Italians recommenced the rejoicings. The tranſparency erected before their theatre was ſo maſterly both in conception and execution, that it is really worthy of particular deſcription:—Within a circular decoration, conſiſting of ſymbolical ornaments, was painted the temple of IRIS, ſurrounded with a beautiful rainbow, on which appeared the goddeſs with all her attributes.

The illuminations which accompanied this grand picture formed three arcades, ſupported by pilaſters, all of the ruſtic order. Between the arcades *Vive le Roi* was ſuſpended in large characters. Above the pilaſters were placed four pyramids, ornamented with ſtreams of fire *, which gave an unſpeakable effect. The inſide of the temple was entirely tranſparent,

* This was effected by rows of lamps placed before reverberators.

and nobly designed, as well as the rainbow and the figure of IRIS.

In the middle of the temple was placed a portrait of the king, under a figure of APOLLO, surrounded with his ordinary symbols. Over his head the words POST NUBILA PHŒBUS, and on the two sides of APOLLO were the figures of Peace and Plenty. From the extremity of the erection were carried two pyramids, which completed the grandeur of the whole to a degree of wonder; they were of themselves fifty-two feet high, and at the base fifty feet wide, tapering, as they ascended, to a point.

To enumerate all the prodigious variety of devices which were contained in the paintings on the pyramids would take up much more room than I ought to allow. It is enough to say that they were all transparent, and distributed about in the most fanciful and charming order, being interlaced with innumerable lamps, placed before reverberators. To the BRUNETTIS, father and son, famous Italian painters, was confided the execution of the whole, who had now brought scenery in FRANCE to that perfection which has ever since made it the admiration of all other nations.

These comedians also gave upon these occasions

three new pieces, called the *Illumination*, the *Village Wedding*, and the *Sincere Revels*. They were written by PANNARD, and performed with all the ſucceſs that could be expected from an event ſo naturally intereſting. From this circumſtance it happened that the king was ever after called LOUIS *le bien aime*, thoſe words being a quotation from a ſpeech in one of the pieces.

CHAP. III.

ACTORS.

ANCIENTLY in FRANCE we have ſeen that all the authors were actors. The Trouverres, the Troubadours, the Pilgrims, and even the Prieſts perſonated different characters; and we find them at the head of their reſpective companies acting, ſinging, or poſturing, according to the nature of the ſpectacle they undertook to exhibit. In the *Myſteries*, the *Confraternity of the Paſſion*, were all actors. When the *Myſteries* had yielded to the *Moraliſts*, the performers were partly the prieſts and partly the laiety. By the time the *Children of Sans Souci* joined this confedracy, and they were forbid to perform any other than profane ſubjects that had a moral tendency, the prieſts retired from the ſtage, and the laiety had excluſive poſſeſſion of it.

The retirement of the prieſts ſeemed to be the ſignal for improvement. The tragedies of JODELLE and the reſt muſt have boaſted much more regular actors than the rhapſodies that preceded them; de-

lamation, however, was all that yet could be expected. It ſhould ſeem, indeed, that till then the employment of an actor had never been conſidered as a profeſſion of itſelf, for we are told, and particularly by MAROT, who died before JODELLE, that a man, whoſe epitaph he had written, of the name of SERRE, was the firſt regular actor *.

As to women, we have ſeen JODELLE obliged to perſonate his own *Cleopatra;* and, if credit can be given to the beſt French authorities, a woman of the name of BEAUPRE was the firſt actreſs in FRANCE, who might certainly have performed in the pieces written by HARDY, but not earlier, for ſhe was very old and had retired from the ſtage before CORNEILLE brought out *Melite.* She is reported to have ſaid to CORNEILLE that times were changed; for that before he wrote the pieces were miſerable, and the performers excellent, but that ſince he had written, the pieces were excellent, and the performers miſerable.

* JODELLE did for MAROT what MAROT had done for SERRE. He alſo publiſhed his works on a variety of ſubjects, in 1542. The epitaph written by JODELLE on MAROT is ſo neat that I ſhall tranſcribe it.

Quercy, La Cour, Le Piemont, L'Univers,
Me fit, me tint, m'enterra, me connut.
Quercy mon los, la Cour tout mon temps eut,
Piemont a mes os, L'Univers mes vers.

We have the names of PONT ALAIS, GRINGORE, and others who muſt have been cotemporaries of SERRE, for they are reported to have aſſiſted in the *Myſteries*, and being excellent buffoons, they were perpetually quarrelling with the prieſts. Inſtead of announcing their amuſements by bills it was then the cuſtom, as we have formerly ſeen it in ENGLAND, to beat a drum about the ſtreets; and theſe men having done ſo one day to the great annoyance of a prieſt, who was preaching, and who had a grudge againſt them, he came out of the church and demanded how they came to be ſo audacious as to beat a drum while he was preaching. "I may as well aſk you," ſaid PONT ALAIS, "how you came to be ſo audacious "as to preach while I was beating my drum; we are "both following our occupations." The prieſt, however, to ſhew who had the upper hand, complained to the magiſtrates, and the actor was impriſoned for ſix months *.

We have the names of other actors before HARDY, but we know little of their merit. During his time, however, at the head of a numerous company we find TURLUPIN, GAUTHIER, GARGUILLE, HAUDOIN, BONIFACE, CAPITAINE, and others,

* PONT ALAIS was hunch-backed; and ſeeing a Cardinal one day in the ſtreet, who was built upon the ſame principle, he ran againſt him as if by accident. After he had very humbly apologiſed for his careleſſneſs, "I beg pardon of your excellence," ſaid he, "but "you ſee two mountains may meet notwithſtanding the proverb."

who are said to have been very celebrated; but it should seem by this that the productions of HARDY, which were generally called tragedies, must have been full of buffoonery; for TURLUPIN, who, from 1583 to 1634, was a principal performer in that company, was a mere buffoon, The word *turlupinade* taken from his name, having been from that time to this incorporated into the French language as a term implying a silly jest.

GARGUILLE succeeded TURLUPIN, and HAUDOIN, GARGUILLE, exactly in the same steps. The latter is said to have learnt so much of the jargon of physicians by performing doctors and apothecaries on the stage, that he retired to MELUN without the smallest knowledge of physic but technical terms, and there made a fortune in quality of physician.

All this, however, seems to have been reformed when CORNEILLE began to write for the stage; for, notwithstanding the handsome compliment of Madame BEAUPRE, and her predelection for the buffoonery just described, which she was pleased facetiously to call good acting, BELLEROSE, the hero for whom CORNEILLE wrote, and who, about 1685, became manager of the company at the *Hotel de Bourgogne*, gave so new and so natural a turn to dramatic representation, both in tragedy and comedy,

that, followed up by CHEVALIER, GUERON, BRECOURT, and others, mummery and buffoonery ſoon gave way to truth and nature *.

To theſe ſucceeded MONTFLEURY, LA FLEUR, LA THUILLERIE, MONDORY, LA THORRILLIERE, JODELET, DU PARC, and his wife, CHAMPMELE, and his wife, RAISIN, BEJART, and his wife and daughter, Madmoiſelle DESŒILLETS, BEAUCHATEAU, and at length the great BARON, who was called the French Roſcius. Theſe and others of inferior rank made up the companies *Au Marais*, at the *Hotel de Bourgogne*, and the *Palais Royal*.

MONTFLEURY was a man of family and page to the Duke of GUISE. He was held in great conſideration by perſons of rank. The Cardinal de

* BRECOURT had the misfortune to kill a coachman. He retired into HOLLAND, where he became an actor in a company belonging to the Prince of ORANGE; but being informed that the court of FRANCE had applied to the court of HOLLAND to give up ſome perſon who had taken refuge in that country, he ſuſpected he might be the perſon meant, and therefore returned and threw himſelf at the feet of the king, reminding him that upon a former occaſion he had probably ſaved his life by killing a wild boar that they had hunted. Your majeſty ſaid he even did me the honour to aſk if I was wounded. The king ſmiled, aſſured him he was not the man whoſe life he fought, pardoned him, and ordered MOLIERE to take him again into his company.

RICHELIEU in particular undertook the care and expence of his wedding, He had very brilliant abilities as an actor, and we have already ſeen that his exertions coſt him his life *.

LA FLEUR, who took the ſituation of MONTFLEURY after his death, was an admirable actor, and in a more extenſive way than his predeceſſor. He is reported to have been the firſt who poſſeſſed what the French call *des entrailles;* that is to ſay, the art of feeling to make others feel. He married the daughter of an actor called GROS GUILLAUME, and left a ſon who became a celebrated performer under the name of LA THUILLERIE.

MONDORY, a performer in tragedy, ſuſtained a reſpectable ſituation, *au Marais.* He was ſeized with an apoplexy, as he was performing the part of *Herod* in the *Mariamne* of TRISTAN, and ſurvived but a few days.

LA THORILLIERE was a man of family, and was a captain in the cavalry, but thought proper to

* MONTFLEURY conſidered his profeſſion of an actor ſo honourable, that when his marriage articles were preparing, and he was deſired, being a man of family, to deſcribe in what manner he choſe to be diſtinguiſhed, he anſwered that it was not in the power of anceſtors to confer talents, and that the moſt honourable title he deſired to be known by was that of actor to the king.

leave every other occupation to follow the profeſſion of an actor. He was remarkable for performing equally well the parts of kings and peaſants. He left behind him a ſon and a grandſon, both of whom were actors.

JODELET was an admirable comic actor. His features were ſo marked and ſo groteſque, that whenever he appeared he excited loud burſts of laughter, of which he ſeemed perfectly unconſcious. His humour was very peculiar, and the authors, to give force to their characters, accommodated themſelves to it. Hence ſeveral of the pieces of that time were named after this actor; witneſs, *Jodelet Maitre et Valet*, *Jodelet Souffleté*, and others.

DU PARC ſucceeded JODELET. His ſucceſs was at firſt doubtful, though his merit was acknowledged; but, having performed an original part, a kind of utterer of bon mots, he hit upon a humour ſo whimſical that he became a great favourite. He died the ſame year in which the world loſt MOLIERE. He had long, however, left the *Palais Royal*, having followed his wife to the *Hotel de Bourgogne*, as we have ſeen, through the connivance of BOILEAU and RACINE.

CHAMPMELE was a very mediocre performer,

but he is celebrated, if celebrity may be that way acquired, for fathering other people's pieces, and other people's children. There were five or six pieces given to him, which appeared in the works of others, in particular *La Coupe Enchantee*, and *Je vous prends ſans Verd*, both of which are among the productions of LA FONTAINE, and *Delie*, which was undoubtedly written by VISE; but for the merit of theſe pieces, FONTAINE might have been aſhamed of his part; and, as to VISE, it is no great matter whether he wrote *Delie* or not, for he was as dull as CHAMPMELE.

As to the other accommodating part of his character, winking at his wife's infidelity, who was an incomparable actreſs, and a beautiful woman, I can only ſay he deſerves no pity, for every man of that convenient deſcription, ought to have an unfaithful wife. The lady is ſaid to have dealt her favours pretty liberally. We have ſeen RACINE in love with her, and we are told that he was ſucceeded in her affections by the Count de CLERMONT TONNERRE. This gave riſe to an epigram, which, as it is impoſſible on account of the names, to render with any effect into Engliſh, I ſhall tranſcribe as it is.

A la plus tendre amour elle fut deſtinee,
Qui prit long tems RACINE dans ſon cœur;
Mais par un inſigne malheur,
Le TONNERRE eſt venu, qui l'a deracinee.

Madame CHAMPMELE is ſaid to have been endowed with very extraordinary talents, together with a moſt conſummate knowledge of the world. Her manners were uncommonly elegant, and her converſation ſweet and amiable. Her houſe was the rendezvous for men of diſtinguiſhed merit; but it has been ſaid by way of pleaſantry, that notwithſtanding ſo much temptation, except in the inſtance of her little ſlip with TONNERRE, ſhe was conſtant to DESPREAUX, RACINE, LA CHAPELLE, VALINCOUR, LA FONTAINE, and—her huſband.

It is ſaid that CHAMPMELE meditated a ſingular revenge on his rivals, which induced BOILEAU to write the following epigram:

De ſix amans contens et non jaloux,
Qui tour a tour ſervoient Madame CLAUDE,
Le moins volage etoit JEAN ſon epoux:
Un jour pourtant d'humeur un peu trop chaude,
Serroit de pres ſa ſervante aux yeux doux,
Loſqu'un des ſix lui dit, que faites vous?
Le jeu n'eſt ſur avec cette Ribaude;
Ah! voulez-vous, JEAN, JEAN, nous gater tous!

CHAMPMELE, we are told, outlived his mother and his wife, and ſoon afterwards died in the following extraordinary manner. Coming out of the church of the Cordeliers, where he had been to put up two requiems for his departed mother and wife, the prieſt demanded the money. CHAMPMELE gave him a piece of thirty ſols, the requiems being ten ſols

a piece, "No," ſaid he, "keep that to pay for my "requiem and inſtantly dropped down and ex- "pired."

RAISIN was an actor of infinite merit. He was equal to any ſtyle of comedy. He was called PROTEUS, not more for his facility of changing from part to part than for the variety he threw into the part itſelf. To theſe ſuperior talents he united an excellent underſtanding, and inexhauſtible gaiety and good humour. He was an admirable teller of a ſtory, and his company was coveted by all ranks; a circumſtance proving in him that talents are as dangerous as they are enviable, for the pleaſures he courted were the cauſe of his death.

BEJART was himſelf but an indifferent actor, but his wife was a woman of great theatrical talents, and ſhrewd and penetrating judgement. We have ſeen that MOLIERE, when he left the *Illuſtrious* theatre to go into PROVINCE, choſe her for his guide in his theatrical conduct. She, having before been accuſtomed to regulate a country company. Her attention to him and his intereſt was ſo much to his ſatisfaction that he married her daughter; who, under their inſtructions became a celebrated actreſs, and an excellent ſinger.

Some have endeavoured to ſully her character, and I am the more particular in mentioning this on account of having read an Engliſh hiſtory of Moliere, where calumny is unſparingly dealt out on the head of this poor woman. The French, however do her juſtice, not one of whom, at leaſt that I have ſeen, and my perquiſitions have been pretty induſtrious, have hinted at any thing againſt her reputation. It is true ſhe married four or five years after the death of Moliere, but her general conduct in his life time, and the noble trait of duty, tenderneſs, and reſpect to his memory, which we witneſſed at the time of his funeral, muſt in every candid mind acquit her of any infidelity towards a man whoſe alliance with her was a proud and enviable diſtinction, and whoſe affectionate and friendly attention to her and her family was warm and unremitting throughout his life.

Madmoiſelle Desœillets was an actreſs of conſiderable merit. She was the original *Hermione* in Racine's tragedy of *Andromache*, and performed the part with wonderful force and energy. Champmele, however, who came after her, and who had more pathos and feeling, ſucceeded ſo greatly that Desœillets confeſſed herſelf conquered, which being told to the king he ſaid it was a miſtake, for that they both performed the part admirably; but

to repreſent it to perfection, DESŒILLETS ought to play the two firſt acts and CHAMPMELE the three laſt.

BEAUCHATEAU was a reſpectable actor, and had a ſon who gave promiſe of uncommon talents both as an author and a performer; but at the age of fourteen he came to ENGLAND, where he abjured the Roman Catholic religion, and afterwards travelled into PERSIA, and was never after heard of.

It will be proper here to ſpeak of BARON, but to follow him through his career would lay me under the premature neceſſity of introducing POISSON, D'ANCOURT, and a number of other actors, an account of whom had better come when we have examined thoſe pieces in which they performed. As BARON, however, was cotemporary with many of thoſe who are mentioned in this chapter, I ſhall ſpeak of him previous to his quitting the theatre in 1691, when he retired with a penſion of a thouſand crowns.

This performer is allowed infinitely to have ſurpaſſed all who had gone before him. To ſtrong natural conception he added a ſolid and deciſive underſtanding; his figure was noble, his voice clear and powerful, his deportment was graceful and ma-

jeſtic, his manner varied and accommodating, and he never violated art unleſs to adorn nature. "The "rules," ſaid he, "forbid us to lift the hands above "the head, but if paſſion carries them there it is "right; nature knows better than the rules." Rousseau ſays that Baron gave new luſtre to the beauties of Racine, and threw a veil over the defects of Pradon.

Baron was certainly an actor of moſt extraordinary talents, which he availed himſelf of every opportunity to ripen and perfect. Bred up under the eye of Moliere, it was impoſſible not to benefit materially by the admirable precepts of ſo excellent a maſter. This added to thoſe gifts, with which by nature he had been abundantly endowed, qualified him for every ſtile of acting; and, except in what we call low comedy, a line he never attempted, he was allowed eminently to excel all others.

Baron wrote ſeveral pieces for the theatre, which have a ſmartneſs and ſomething very paſſable, but nothing more. His dialogue is lively, and his ſcenes are varied; and having mixed a good deal in ſociety, his characters are generally natural; but they are rather ſketches than plays, traits than ſcenes; and though taken abſtractly they produced ſtage

effect, yet their flimſyneſs and want of conſequence rendered their ſucceſs weak, and their duration tranſitory.

A French author ſays that the public never allow a man merit more than in one way, and that though the writings of BARON ought to have enſured him reputation, yet theſe meaner pretenſions are ſo loſt in the ſplendour of his talents as an actor that, rather than be obliged to admire them, they dont chuſe to acknowledge them at all. For my part I cannot ſee this, though I muſt confeſs it is a doctrine that ever has been held; for the more a man variouſly ſucceeds the more he muſt naturally be an object of public admiration; and this is particularly noticeable in MOLIERE, whoſe ſplendid talents as a writer, have never leſſened his reputation as an actor.

I am afraid the friends of BARON have attempted to give him an overſtrained reputation more ſuitable to his vanity, which was inſufferable, than proportioned to his talents. It was his common obſervation that every hundred years produces a CÆSAR, but that it takes two thouſand to produce a ROSCIUS*. BARON's father was an actor, and his

* BARON's coachman and laquais one day being very ill treated

mother an actreſs; he had alſo a ſon of promiſing talents, who died very young; and though from the intermarriages of this family, as will hereafter be ſeen, many members of the theatre were produced, he deſervedly ſtood at the head of it, and will ever be conſidered as a man of wonderful talents.

---

by the ſervants of the Marquis de BIRON, he was determined to demand juſtice, and for this purpoſe ſought out the Marquis, to whom he preferred his complaint. "*Monſeigneur*," ſaid he, "*vos gens ont* "*battu les miens*; *je vous en demande juſtice.*" The Marquis a little "piqued, perhaps, at the familiarity of *vos gens* and *les miens*, anſwered him dryly. "*Mon pauvre Baron que veux-tu que je te diſe?* "*Pourquoi as-tu des gens?*"

CHAP. IV.

FRENCH THEATRE TO THE DEATH OF RACINE.

At the time of MOLIERE's death, and ſoon after of CORNEILLE's final receſſion from the ſtage, RACINE ruled with almoſt undiſputed ſway in tragedy, having no competitors worthy conſideration, except T. CORNEILLE, CAMPISTRON, and BOURSAULT; except we ſhould mention FONTENELLE, whoſe works for the theatre, like thoſe of LA FONTAINE, were written more for amuſement than profeſſionly. The vapid PRADON muſt be noticed merely for the ſake of form.

Comedy after the death of MOLIERE was almoſt wholly ſuſtained by T. CORNEILLE and BOURSAULT; till, in 1686, D'ANCOURT brought out his *Fonds Predues**, ſo extremely difficult was it to

* D'ANCOURT, whoſe name both as an author and an actor will by and by merit reſpectable notice, was ſuppoſed to have injured his reputation by bringing out this piece. RACINE called it, in deriſion, the ſcaffold of D'ANCOURT. He, however, ſpoke truth by accident, for it happened to be the ſcaffold on which he roſe to build his reputation.

attain any thing like the ſtandard MOLIERE had ſet up.

As to the rincings of BOISROBERT's muddy hypocrene, they had evaporated long before; and long before had ceaſed the drolls of SCARRON; which, though admirable in their way, were in common with a multitude of other mixed productions cruſhed by the powerful genius of MOLIERE. BENSERADE had ſo injured himſelf by his diſputes with this truly celebrated man, that he thought it more prudent to write ſonnets and epigrams, and obtain patronage among the great, than bring out plays and riſk the deciſion of the public; and as to BOYER's left handed fame, it ought to be conſigned to oblivion with the impertinent prattling of VISE, who only made himſelf celebrated by cenſuring what he could not imitate. CHAPELLE was juſt as much of a writer as a muſical amateur is of a leader of a band, and even LA FONTAINE, deſervedly celebrated as he ever will be, and particularly for thoſe writings which he ſo ſolemnly abjured *, would

* It is for the world to decide whether the conduct of LULLY or LA FONTAINE was in this inſtance replete with the groſſeſt folly. The intentions of the two men are out of the queſtion, and it is almoſt an inſult to the memory of LA FONTAINE to couple his name with that muſical buffoon. LULLY's conduct in burning his opera in compliaiſnce to the prieſt, when he had a copy in his cloſet, was

render the indiſpenſible neceſſity of mentioning him here an irkſome duty did it not give opportunity

full of knavery and impiety; but LA FONTAINE could have no motive in abjuring the ſentiments contained in his Tales, but to expiate what he felt as a crime of no leſs magnitude than having corrupted the morals of youth; and, taken in that point of view, ſurely nothing could be more meritorious. He aſſembled the academy, of which body he was a member; and in their hearing, and in that of a prieſt, at the time he conceived himſelf near his end, he execrated this incomparable book as an abominable work. He begged pardon of GOD, of the church, of the academy, and of all mankind for having publiſhed it, and in particular for having a ſhort time before retouched a new edition, which had ſold rapidly throughout EUROPE. LA FONTAINE ſhould have conſidered, or if he was too modeſt, the academy ſhould have conſidered for him, that neither the ſentiments nor the circumſtances were his own, but that he had merely clothed old Tales from BOCACE and others in poetry, ſo rare, ſo neat, and ſo winning, that the French language had attained nothing equal to it before, nor had it been to the time of this abjuration ſucceſsfully imitated. Query, therefore, though I hope I am no ſtickler for immorality, whether reviving theſe old ſtories which had been ſo many years in the mouths of every nurſe and midwife, and, I am afraid, of every abbeſs and nun throughout the kingdom, might not have been pardoned in favour of the advantage on the ſide of literature in general, and poetry in particular; eſpecially as the French, and above all, the ladies, have been ever remarkable, not only for conſidering that wit as the moſt palatable, as moſt calculated for the tierceneſs and poignancy of their language, and that it would be prudery not openly to encourage, which is the moſt highly ſeaſoned with *double entendre*. The fact is, LA FONTAINE was in the ſeaſon of ſickneſs, and M. POUJET, his confeſſor, thought it the intereſt of the church that he ſhould abjure, not what had made the morals of the country worſe than they were before, for heaven knows that would have been at any time a difficult taſk, but what had expoſed the intrigues of religious profeſſors.

of acknowledging his incomparable merit in every part of his productions except thoſe written for the ſtage.

I have already ſaid of BOURSAULT that his comedies, during the time of MOLIERE, having been the offspring of feuds and controverſies, in which he was always conquered, poſſeſſed conſiderable merit, but were ſeldom intereſting, becauſe they ſpent their force againſt the reſiſtance oppoſed by this powerful competitor. *Le Medecin Volant*, *Le Mort Vivant*, and *Les Cadenats*, were of a deſcription too weak to cope with thoſe pieces of MOLIERE, to which they were oppoſed; but, as if the exiſtence of that father of comedy had been the enchantment which held the genius of BOURSAULT ſpell-bound, no ſooner did that exiſtence ceaſe, but, like a ſpirit emancipated from confinement, this author's merit began to be acknowledged; of which truth, as in many other inſtances, it will be impoſſible for me, in conſequence of ſo much matter, which will now preſs on me, to mention more than ſome leading particulars.

In 1679, BOURSAULT brought out *Le Mercure Galant*, and *Germanicus*, which laſt had before appeared under the title of *La Princeſſe des Cleves*. The firſt of theſe pieces abounded with true comic humour, and the other with harmony, pathos, and ſtrength. VISE,

the author of a Journal called *Le Mercure Galant*, who was triumphantly ridiculed in this comedy, notwithſtanding we have ſeen him formerly join BOURSAULT in ridiculing MOLIERE, complained to the court againſt his old friend. The court referred him to the General of the Police, who ſaid he could not find in his conſcience to ſuppreſs the piece, it was ſo entertaining; but that, to meet the matter half way, he would iſſue a beheſt to call it *La Comedie ſans Titre*, in order that, if it was not a juſt ſatire, nobody might find it out.

As to *Germanicus*, it had prodigious ſucceſs. CORNEILLE in the academy ſpoke of it in the higheſt terms, and ſaid, among other things, that it wanted nothing but the name of RACINE to be conſidered as one of the beſt tragedies on the theatre. This RACINE conſidered as a ſarcaſm, and he, therefore, was never afterwards cordial with CORNEILLE.

Marié Stuart, *Phaeton*, *Meleagre*, *Mots a la Mode*, *Eſope a la Ville*, and *Eſope a la Cour*, make up the remainder of BOURSAULT's works, which being written upon different occaſions, and for different purpoſes, had of courſe various ſucceſs. The two *Æſops* are certainly not calculated for intereſting effect, being thronged with fabulous applications;

the Fables, however, are written with great beauty, point, truth, and intereſt; and have ever been held in admiration, though they have been over and over again attempted both here and in other countries with but indifferent effect on the ſtage.

Eſope a la Ville nevertheleſs ſucceeded greatly during its firſt run; which, indeed, in ſome meaſure, was owing to the preſence of mind of the celebrated RAISIN, who performed the part of ÆSOP. Finding that the audience began to tire at this perpetual repetition of fables, though they greatly admired the fables themſelves, he came forward and told them that he plainly perceived among them tokens of diſcontent; but the fact was that the author, determined to bring ÆSOP on the ſtage, would have failed in portraying the truth of his character if he had made him do any thing but repeat fables. "This "character," ſaid he, "as all characters ſhould be, "is drawn naturally; and I can only tell you that "if good fables, which are generally conſidered as "the eſſence of dramatic pieces, ſhould be deemed "an imperfection in the piece before you, we had "better ſtop here, for I have yet eleven or twelve "fables to repeat and all as good as thoſe you have "heard." The loudeſt and moſt univerſal applauſe ſucceeded, and the piece from that moment was con-

ſidered as a work of great genius and a brilliant ornament to the theatre.

Let us look after T. CORNEILLE. *Darius*, brought out in 1655, *Le Geolier de ſoi-meme*, in 1659, *Le Galant Double* in 1660, and *Stilicon* in the ſame year, had none of them more than paſſable ſucceſs; but in 1661, *Camma*, which ſubject was ſuggeſted by FOUQUET, and recommended by the great CORNEILLE to his brother when he returned to the theatre, ſhews that fortune with T. CORNEILLE was always in extremes; for the *Hotel de Bourgogne*, where it was repreſented, was ſo thronged and that repeatedly both in the front and behind the ſcenes, that there was ſcarcely room for the actors to perform their parts.

The concourſe of people who came to this tragedy induced the actors, who had exhibited till then only on Sundays, Tueſdays, and Fridays, to add Thurſday to their nights of performance; and this afterwards became a cuſtom during the run of any piece that had extraordinary ſucceſs.

Pyrrhus performed in 1661, *Maximien* in 1662, *Perſée et Demetrius* in 1662, *Antiochus* in 1666, and *Le Baron D'Albikrac* in 1668, had each a creditable degree of ſucceſs. *Laodice*, brought out the ſame

year, did not ſucceed ſo well*. *Annibal* in 1669, *La Comteſſe D'Orgueil* in 1670, and *Theodat* in 1672, ſhared that ſort of fate uſually experienced by this author, when fortune was not in her moſt generous mood. *Ariane*, produced in the ſame year, though an indifferent piece was well received on account of the admirable acting of Madame CHAMPMELE, and has frequently been revived ſince. This is the play that induced BOILEAU to give T. CORNEILLE the name of the Younger Brother. CORNEILLE is ſaid to have written this tragedy in ſeventeen days.

Achille in 1673, and *Don Cæſar D'Avalos* in 1674, did tolerably well, but this author determined to rouſe the public, had recourſe in his next piece, *Circe*, which he brought forward in 1675, to machines and decorations. This anſwered his expectations for the performance ran forty nights in ſucceſſion, and was freqently afterwards repeated during the ſeaſon; and CORNEILLE, determined to ſtrike while the iron was hot, in the ſame year produced

* T. CORNEILLE could not help expreſſing his aſtoniſhment that this play had ſo little ſucceſs. "Why," ſaid he to a friend, "the "ſcene lies in CAPPADOCIA, and the manners of that people are "pictured to the life." "That's the reaſon, perhaps," anſwered the friend, "that it is not reliſhed in FRANCE. I'll tell you how to "do. Send it to CAPPADOCIA to be performed."

L'Inconnu, a piece upon the ſame principle, which had a prodigious number of repreſentations, of which the firſt thirty were at double price.

Le Feſtin de Pierre, brought out in 1677, was nothing more than MOLIERE's comedy under that title put into verſe, and of courſe rendered more unnatural. *Le Comte D'Eſſex*, produced in 1678, was performed with ſucceſs, and has been often repeated.

La Devinèreſſe, performed in 1679, and *Bradamante* in 1695, are all that now remain of the dramatic pieces written by T. CORNEILLE. He is ſaid, in *La Devinèreſſe*, to have called in the aſſiſtance of VISE; this is not very probable. It was performed forty-ſeven ſucceſſive times to prodigious houſes *.

This laſt was not one of thoſe meteors which now and then burſt forth to irradiate the reputation of this author; not that it ought to be taken for granted that his productions of that deſcription were his beſt;

* The ſubject of this comedy ſeems to have created its ſucceſs. It aroſe from a report that a woman of diſtinction had poiſoned ſome of her relations to poſſeſs their fortunes; and Madam JOBIN, the principal character in the piece, recommends ludicrouſly this method of getting rich, and for that purpoſe expoſes to ſale a medicine which ſhe calls *La Poudre de Succeſſion.*

on the contrary they ſeem to have owed their fame principally to capriciouſneſs, a quality very apt to cheriſh what is ſuperficial and paſs over ſterling merit.

T. Corneille alſo wrote for the theatre two operas under the titles of *Pſyche*, and *Medee;* neither of which had great ſucceſs, probably owing to Lully. Having loſt Quinault, the only poet who knew how to give advantage to his muſic, the cloven foot appeared; for with all his vaunting that his muſic had made Quinault a poet, it fairly proved by his ill ſucceſs after that writer's retirement, that the beauty of Quinault's poetry had made Lully a muſician.

I have been the more particular in this account of the works of T. Corneille, becauſe they are very frequently confounded with thoſe of his brother; an error that ought clearly to be pointed out. There certainly was a wide diſtinction between the two men; cauſed by the ſimple fact that the genius of the elder brother was infinitely ſuperior to that of the younger. If, however, the works of one may truly be called great, thoſe of the other may fairly claim the title of reſpectable; and nothing can prove this more fully than his making head in the extraordinary way we have ſometimes ſeen at the

time when his brother's brilliant ſucceſs muſt have been a great obſtacle to his reputation.

Some of the beauties of the great CORNEILLE were ſtrong conception, grandeur of mind, and true delineation of character. T. CORNEILLE could only boaſt conduct, regularity, and theatrical effect. Hence the cauſe ſometimes of ſudden and unexpected ſucceſs. In other reſpects his pictures, which were admirable on the ſide of deſign, were faint on the ſide of colouring. His diction is unequal and weak, and only confirms the facility with which he laboured; always a dangerous circumſtance, and that ſeldom permits an author to attain any thing beyond mediocrity, unleſs, through impulſive genius, the mind be inſpired with ideas ſo replete with truth and force, that it may be ſaid they are rather tranſmitted than written.

CAMPISTRON, a writer of reſpectable conſideration, next claims our attention. He was born at TOULOUSE, in 1659, and died of an apoplexy in 1723. CAMPISTRON was a nobleman by birth; and to the happieſt diſpoſitions for a purſuit of literature, received a moſt perfect and correct education. His taſte for poetry led him to PARIS, where RACINE became his guide in his dramatic

career. CAMPISTRON became the imitator of his preceptor; but, though he equalled him, and ſometimes excelled him in the conduct of his pieces, he always fell ſhort of the beauty of his verſification.

Owing to his birth, his talent for poetry, and the protection of the Duke de VENDÔME, he poſſeſſed ſeveral conſiderable employments, and was called on to fill a ſeat in the French Academy *.

---

* It is extremely remarkable, and very proper to be mentioned here, that a ſingle trait of private gratitude in CAMPISTRON laid the foundation of the elevated rank and ſplendid fortune of Cardinal ALBERONI. CAMPISTRON, as he made a tour through ITALY, was wounded, robbed, and ſtripped near PARMA, in an obſcure village where ALBERONI was curate. The charitable prieſt gave CAMPISTRON an aſylum; fed him, cured him of his wounds, cloathed him, and did what he could to ſet him forward on his journey. When CAMPISTRON ſometime after attended the Duke of VENDOME to the wars in ITALY, he drew his maſter inſenſibly towards the retreat of his preſerver ALBERONI; and, knowing that he could materially ſerve the Duke by informing him where the country people concealed their corn, of which article the army was in great need, he had no doubt but the generoſity of VENDOME would induce him liberally to reward ALBERONI; and thus, by being the inſtrument of his good fortune, he ſhould not only have an opportunity, of reſcuing a man of talents from obſcurity, but of giving a noble proof of his own gratitude by making ſuch an ample return for the hoſpitality he had formerly received at his hands. The ſequel every body knows. ALBERONI followed VENDOME to SPAIN, and was there ſo uſeful that he was very ſoon entruſted with ſecrets of ſtate, and at length became firſt miniſter to the king of SPAIN.

In 1683 he brought out his tragedy of *Virginie*, which gave his name the ſtamp of reputation. He cloſely allied himſelf with RAISIN, the actor, at whoſe houſe he lived in the continual ſociety of all the men of talents and genius of that day; ſo that he had the advantage of their united opinions before he produced any thing to the public.

Arminius came forward in 1684. At this time the French taſte was guided by the caprice of Madame de BOUILLON, who was conſidered as the arbiter of the public judgment, She had taken a whim to patronize a very indifferent tragedy, called *Teléphonte*, written by CHAPELLE. In conſequence of this *Arminius* was thruſt into a corner; CAMPISTRON, therefore, withdrew his piece under the idea of improving it, and having made a few immaterial alterations, he dedicated it to Madame de BOUILLON, after which time it was univerſally followed.

Andronic was brought out in the following year, and had ſuch prodigious ſucceſs that for the firſt twenty nights the prices of admittance were doubled; and, when after that they had reduced them to their uſual ſtandard, they were again obliged to double them for a conſiderable time; and even then they

could ſcarcely keep the theatre clear enough to give the actors place for their performance.

Alcibiade, performed alſo in 1685, had not the ſucceſs of any of thoſe pieces which preceded it. CAMPISTRON was accuſed of having borrowed the ſubject from the *Themiſtocle* of DU RYER, but this was not the truth; or, if it had been ſo, it was not a ſufficient reaſon for the coolneſs with which the public received it, for the moſt celebrated authors have at all times taken the ſame liberties; and whenever this has been done to advantage, thoſe productions have been uniformly conſidered as an additional value to the public ſtock of literature. The real fact was, that CAMPISTRON not having had ſufficient time to prepare his play, it came out in a more unfiniſhed ſtate than any of thoſe the public had before ſeen.

Phraate produced in 1686, was ſo bold a picture of the times that CAMPISTRON rouſed all PARIS againſt him. It was performed but three times, and afterwards ſuppreſſed with all poſſible haſte leſt the incenſed party ſhould have had influence enough to ſend the author to the Baſtile.

Phocion performed in 1688, had very indifferent ſucceſs. The public had not forgot *Phraate*. This

induced CAMPISTRON to turn his mind to a ſubject which he thought would conciliate all parties. He, therefore, in 1690, brought forward *Adrien*, taken from the Hiſtory of the Church; but the public, as little deſirous of ſeeing religion on the ſtage as politics, gave this chriſtian tragedy, as it was called, a very heretical reception.

CAMPISTRON, however, was determined to ſtick to ſcripture; and, therefore, in his tragedy of *Tiridate*, which was exhibited in 1691, the very delicate ſubject, from the Second Book of SAMUEL, of the amour of AMNON and his ſiſter TAMER, was introduced on the theatre, under the veil of profane hiſtory. This tragedy had but little ſucceſs; and, though it has been at different times revived, its reception was always ſo little in its favour, that it would have been better for the author and the public if it had been at once conſigned to oblivion.

Actius, brought out in 1693, is ſo little known, and its fate ſo little remembered, that a French author ſays it is entirely loſt to the world except the following line:

"Ce grand ACTIUS, ſous qui l'univers tremble."

Pompeia. This tragedy was publiſhed in the works of CAMPISTRON, but its original ſucceſs is

not known. His comedies will come more properly hereafter; we have, therefore, nothing now to prevent our leaving the courſe fairly open to RACINE, except the neceſſity of noticing PRADON, who was the ſame ſort of thorn in RACINE's ſide that BOURSAULT had been in the ſide of MOLIERE; with very diſtinct and different pretenſions, however, BOURSAULT having poſſeſſed great genius, and every literary requiſite, except a claſſical education, and PRADON having boaſted very little from nature without any education at all*.

But there were ſo many authors of that time of the ſame deſcription in PARIS, that PRADON, if he had relied on mere patronage without ſetting himſelf up as the rival of RACINE, might have quietly enjoyed ſome partial reputation, and a good deal of profit; but his conduct in ſociety was like that of a fool in company: He was perpetually betraying his ignorance in his loquacity, inſtead of prudently concealing it by remaining ſilent. The conſequence was, that he drew on his head all the vengeance of RACINE's admirers, and particularly that of

* The Prince de CONTI meeting PRADON after the firſt repreſentation of his tragedy of *Tamerlaine*, "Why you have tranſported "in your play," ſaid the Prince, "a town from ASIA to EUROPE." "I humbly beg your Royal Highneſs's pardon," ſaid PRADON, "but I don't underſtand chronology."

BOILEAU; by which means he was perpetually loaded with literary difgrace. In ſhort, had he not vainly and ridiculouſly compared himſelf to RACINE, his name would not have been held in ſuch contempt; or in other words, had he been modeſt as a man, he would have been conſidered paſſable as poet; but to ſpeak of RACINE.

We have ſeen in what manner the *Mithridate* *, and the *Iphigene* of RACINE, conquered the *Pulcherie*, and the *Suréne* of CORNEILLE. It will now be proper to ſpeak of the remaining pieces of RACINE, which are *Phedre et Hypolite*, *Eſther*, and *Athalie*.

Againſt *Phedre et Hypolite*, which came out in 1677, the whole force of PRADON's friends was drawn up in martial array; not only with a determination to ſuppreſs this play of RACINE, but to eſtabliſh another under the ſame title written by PRADON. Among this party Madame DESHOULIERES, a celebrated writer, was ſupported by the Ducheſs of BOUILLON, the Duke of NEVERS

* BEAUBOURG, who was remarkably ugly, performed the part of MITHRIDATE. When Madmoiſelle LECOUVREUR, who performed MONIMIA, ſaid, "Signor you changed countenance?" "Let him, "let him," ſaid a man in the pit, "he can't change for the worſe."

her brother, and many other perſons of diſtinction. The conſequence was that RACINE's play had but very indifferent ſucceſs, and that of PRADON was lifted to the ſkies.

Every induſtry was uſed to humiliate RACINE and exalt PRADON. The boxes, to PRADON's play, were taken for ſeveral nights together; ſo were thoſe to the play of RACINE, and paid; but they were locked up and left empty, that the houſe might appear as if it were deſerted. At the ſame time parties were hired to line the two *parterres* and to applaud one play and hiſs the other. But the moſt curious inſtance of their caprice was, that RACINE was execrated for bringing out a piece upon ſo indecent a ſubject, when the ſame circumſtances, equally reprehenſible in PRADON, was, in his favour, not only paſſed by but commended. It was ſaid that to raiſe this cabal it coſt this illuſtrious party fifteen thouſand livres.

This buſineſs at laſt became very ſerious. Madame DESHOULIERES wrote a ſonnet with a view to humiliate RACINE and BOILEAU. They ſuſpecting this ſonnet to have come from the pen of the Duke of NEVERS, anſwered it by another, conſerving the ſame rhimes, in which they treated the Duke with great ſeverity. He replied by a third,

ſtill keeping the ſame rhimes, and finiſhed by a declaration that he would cane them both in the theatre before the public.

This, however, upon reflection he thought proper to decline; for, his cauſe not being a very good one, and RACINE and BOILEAU having been that year choſen by the king to write the hiſtory of his reign, he was apprehenſive by this vindictive ſpirit he might incur the king's diſpleaſure; which conjecture turned out to be well founded, for the king having noticed this unhandſome treatment to RACINE from firſt to laſt, ſent for the Duke himſelf and repreſented to him that he not only injured the

* However the protection of PRADON might be unworthy the illuſtrious cabal who lent him their countenance, and in particular Madame DESHOULIERES, it muſt not be diſſembled that RACINE drew it all on his head by the envious, the unworthy, the bitter, the indecent criticiſms which he threw out himſelf, and encouraged in his partizans, againſt the venerable CORNEILLE. Madame de BOUILLON and her party, however wrong their means of revenge, meant only to ſupport the cauſe of that great writer againſt all the coxcombs in literature, who at that time ſought every occaſion in their power to humiliate him; at the head of which very reſpectable ſet, RACINE ought to have been aſhamed of placing himſelf. In protecting PRADON they avenged the author of *Cinna*; and it cannot be denied but employing one dunce in a good cauſe, was a thouſand times more worthy in them than it was in RACINE to countenance twenty dunces in the ſupport of a bad one.

cauſe of literature, an object of conſequence in all civilized ſtates, by protecting dunces to the prejudice of men of talents, but that in this particular inſtance he had inſulted two men of merit, whom he himſelf had taken under his royal protection, and to whom it was his reſolution to ſhew every poſſible countenance and attention.

Notwithſtanding this ample juſtice done to the reputation of RACINE, the humiliation of having ſo deſpicable a competitor as PRADON, and that it ſhould be poſſible that the public could heſitate a moment between their different merits, determined RACINE, at all times exceſſively vain, and feelingly irritable, inſtead of exulting in his triumph, and treating the whole buſineſs with the ineffable contempt it deſerved, to retire at once from the theatre. In vain did BOILEAU, that kind friend, whoſe malignant ſpirit had led RACINE into all ſorts of ſcrapes, entreat him, in his ſeventh epiſtle, to reenter on his dramatic career. He perſiſted ſtubbornly till twelve years afterwards, when he brought out *Eſther* from motives of piety.

Madame de MAINTENON, diſguſted with the pieces which were performed by her young ſcholars at her convent of St. CYR, prevailed, with ſome difficulty, on RACINE to undertake ſome religious

ſubject to be repreſented by theſe young ladies. RACINE, after raiſing many difficulties, conſented at laſt, and wrote the tragedy of *Eſther*, which was performed, during the Carnaval at St. CYR, and afterwards at VERSAILLES before the king.

Madame de SEVIGNE calls this RACINE's *chef d'œuvre.* "This poet," ſays ſhe, "has here ſurpaſſed himſelf. He loves his GOD as he loved his miſtreſſes. He is as warm on holy ſubjects as he was on profane. All is beautiful, grand, written with dignity." VOLTAIRE, however, does not happen to be of this opinion. "It ſeems to be," ſays he, "very extraordinary that *Eſther* had univerſal ſucceſs, and that *Athalie*, though performed but two years afterwards, by the ſame perſons, had none at all. The caſe was entirely the reverſe when theſe pieces were performed at PARIS long after the author's death, and when prejudice and partiality had alſo died away. *Athalie* was repreſented then, as it ought to be, with tranſport; and *Eſther* was received with coldneſs, and ſoon forgotten. The fact was; that, at this latter period, there were no ſervile courtiers who complaiſantly acknowledged *Eſther* in Madame de MAINTENON, or malignantly ſaw *Vaſhti* in Madame de MONTESPAN, or *Hamon* in DE LOUVOIS; or, above all, the perſecution

" of the Huguenots in the proſcription of the He-
" brews. The impartial public ſaw nothing in it
" but a ſtupid and improbable ſtory. A ridiculous
" prince, who had lived ſix months with his wife
" without knowing what ſhe was, who commanded
" a whole nation to be murdered without the leaſt
" pretence*, and who afterwards hanged his fa-
" vourite with as little reaſon."

Eſther again rouſed RACINE's enemies; whoſe malignity, in revenge for the ſatire thrown out againſt them by BOILEAU, was ſo indefatigably exerciſed, that from a variety of repreſentations of the circumſtance to Madame de MAINTENON, ſhe was taught to believe that ſhe relaxed the morals of her young penſioners by ſuffering them to exhibit any thing dramatic, even though on religious ſubjects. Deſirious, however, to hear *Athalie*, eſpecially after RACINE had taken ſo much pains to pleaſe her, ſhe conſented that the young ladies ſhould repeat the play in the preſence of the king in a plain antichamber, and without theatrical dreſſes. A piece, thus deprived of the advantages of dreſſes, ſcenery, and decorations, and upon ſuch a ſerious

* Whatever RACINE might intend, this is certainly, with M. VOLTAIRE's leave, a ſtriking picture of the proſcription and perſecution of the Huguenots.

ſubject, could not poſſibly ſucceed to any extraordinary degree; which circumſtance, perhaps, eſcaped VOLTAIRE. The king, however, was ſo well content that he conferred on RACINE the charge of one of his gentlemen in ordinary.

I ſhall now go as ſhortly as poſſible into an examination of RACINE, of whom more, perhaps, has been ſaid by the French than of any other poet that ever had exiſtence, and certainly more, infinitely more, than his merit will bear out.

VOLTAIRE, who knew as well that he was unable to write verſe with the ſame tenderneſs, the ſame beauty, and the ſame harmony as RACINE, as he did that in eloquence, force, and animation, he could greatly excel him, riſked nothing in thoſe rapturous declarations which the world have taken for honeſt candour, and ſelf denying impartiality. Theſe are his words, on the delineation of RACINE's character of *Phedre*. "This," ſays he, "is the *chef* "*d'œuvre* of the human mind, and the eternal but "inimitable model for the labours of all thoſe who "would write verſe." This, in Mr. VOLTAIRE's opinion, ſeems to ſtamp RACINE as the firſt of poets; but does it ſtamp him as the firſt of dramatic writers? At another time, when he was ſpeaking with great enthuſiaſm of the poetry of RACINE, he

was aſked by a friend why he had not given the world the eulogium of that poet as well as of the great CORNEILLE. "It is already done," ſaid VOLTAIRE, "we have nothing to do but to write "under every page, fine, pathetic, harmonious, "ſublime!"

Why did not VOLTAIRE add touching, characteriſtic, important, philoſophic? Becauſe theſe are always to be found in CORNEILLE, often in VOLTAIRE, and ſeldom in RACINE.

The baſis of enthuſiaſtic admiration has ſeldom much ſolidity. The harmony of numbers, the enchantment of language, a happy preciſion, a finiſhed elocution; all theſe captivate and entrance the mind; but when we are told by reflection, or if we are too far gone to reflect, by a candid and finiſhed critic, that all theſe qualities are no more than a felicitous variation of the idiom of a particular tongue, it is impoſſible not to confeſs that, in all this ſuperficial deception, ſimplicity, nature, and the heart have been egregiouſly outraged; and, if this is not the caſe, how comes it that RACINE has never been tranſlated? I anſwer, becauſe it would take a poet, ay, and a great poet, to tranſlate RACINE; whereas a common linguiſt might tranſlate SHAKESPEAR, or even CORNEILLE, into any of the living languages.

What does all this say, but that, seduced by this inimitable elegance, we shut our eyes to faults much more material and important than the beauties we have been able to discover. There is a wide distinction between a great poet and a great author; between RACINE, for instance, and CORNEILLE. Where is there in RACINE the painting, the variety, the depth, the grandeur, the elevation, the force, the majesty that pervade the writings of CORNEILLE? These are not to be found in study, and unfortunately RACINE had no other communication with the Muses. I own that CORNEILLE fails in style and taste; but style and taste are weak and effeminate literary requisites. How such superficial expressions fade away at those more substantial epithets, truth, and nature. I own the writing of CORNEILLE is sometimes hard, incorrect, perplexed, and rude; but I strip off this rind and instantly flows a nourishing juice that warms my heart and cheers and exhilerates my spirits.

The fact is that we find in CORNEILLE a moralist, a philosopher, a legislator, and yet a poet. Love, pity, pride, ambition, cruelty, remorse, repentance, mercy, clemency, are only so many shades which, with the assistance of a thousand intermediate tints, he colours the picture of human nature. RACINE, only a poet, depicts nothing but love in all its various vicissitudes, To love all the other

paſſions are ſubſervient; and, as if this were not enough, his Cupid is now and then a *petit maitre* and apes all the manners of the French court*.

Whenever CORNEILLE has availed himſelf of hiſtory, he has taken the circumſtances and invented appropriate language for his perſonages. If RACINE wrote *Phedre*, *Britannicus*, and *Athalie*, he contented himſelf with verſifying EURIPIDES, TACITUS, and the Scriptures. But the great fault of RACINE, and that which ſhews he was by no means a maſter of dramatic conſtruction, is his having given to love the firſt rank in his tragedies; whereas religion, general honour, patriotiſm, and other important public duties, though confirmed, conciliated, and endeared by love, to render the conſtruction of a play grand and intereſting, ought always to be the primary conſideration.

The very eulogiſts of RACINE loſe themſelves in attempting to draw a compariſon between him and CORNEILLE, They tell you that CORNEILLE

---

* CORNEILLE ſaid to SEGRAIS, who ſat near him on the firſt repreſentation of *Bajazet*, "the perſonages of this tragedy wear "Turkiſh habits but they utter French ſentiments. I ſhall, how-"ever, ſay this only to you, otherwiſe it will be taken for jealouſy, "which I as much diſdain as I love to commend the beautiful "poetry of RACINE."

is like a ſtatue that ſtrikes you by the grandeur, the pride, the force, and the vigour of its form; that RACINE is a picture, ſweet, tender, delicate, natural, and animated, which through the eyes touches the heart. CORNEILLE a torrent that riſes up with violence and precipitates itſelf with impetuoſity; RACINE a majeſtic river whoſe grand and peaceable courſe conveys delight and expands fertility. CORNEILLE an audacious eagle that loſes itſelf in the clouds and ſeizes the thunder of JUPITER; RACINE a tender dove that ſails beautifully through the air to the groves of IDALIA, from whence it returns training the car of VENUS.

That firmneſs of mind, that conſciouſneſs of excellence, that certainty of ſuperiority neceſſary to form a great author, upon all occaſions failed RACINE. He flew, but he did not ſoar; he always pleaſed the ear, but he ſeldom reached the heart; he every where delighted the imagination, but no where touched the ſoul. That which cheated you into an idea of perfection often flattened into dull monotony, and fancied ſublimity, perpetually dwindled into meaſured numbers.

This mental weakneſs was manifeſt in all his conduct as a man. He was not contented with

fancying himself the greatest writer that ever had existed, but he fancied he knew every thing better than every body. When he found himself so greatly favoured by Madame de MAINTENON, who, by the way, had only encouraged his muse to humiliate her rival Madame MONTESPAN, he actualty projected a plan of finance, which he thought would work a complete reformation in the legislature. This plan was put on paper and confided to his patroness, in whose hands LOUIS the fourteenth found it; who not only soundly rated the lady for her officiousness, but warmly inveighed against the temerity of the poet. "How," said he, "because this man can "write harmonious verse, does he think he knows "every thing? and because he is a good poet does "he fancy himself a great minister?"

It was the great misfortune of RACINE that he considered the perfection of versifying the perfection of writing; to which BOILEAU, who seemed like one of those evil genuises that under the mask of kindness lure men to a precipice and then laugh at them as they are precipitated down, did not a little contribute. Thus when he thought he had immortalized himself by any work which the public received coldly, the shock was too much for his spirits. "Though I own," said he to BOILEAU, "nothing "delights me so much as public applause, the least,

" the moſt contemptible criticiſm, always gives me " more pain than the warmeſt praiſe ever gave me " pleaſure." Is this a great man, a ſublime genuis!

Many traits in the life of RACINE, his epigrams, and above all, his preface to *Britannicus*, where with a heart ſwelling and a mind ſtung with envy, he endeavoured with the moſt bitter irony to turn the greateſt part of CORNEILLE's pieces into ridicule, diſcover in RACINE that pityful littleneſs of mind, that cauſtic and iraſcible ſpirit which HORACE attributes to all poets, whom he pleaſantly calls the choleric race.

This perpetual diſcontent and eternal irritability abridged his life. After the buſineſs of his improving the finance, Madame de MAINTENON gave him to underſtand that the king was ſo little ſatisfied with him that he had better not appear at court till the ſtorm was blown over; determined, however, to be convinced, he appeared before the king, who took no notice of him. This ſevere humiliation he could not brook; he, therefore, retired to his native country, where he is ſaid to have lingered a twelvemonth in a moſt diſtracted ſtate of mind, and then to have died on the twenty-firſt of April, in 1699, of a broken heart.

Faithful to the immutable dictates of ſacred truth, let us not withhold a fair tribute of praiſe to RACINE. As a poet he has been unfortunately ſpoken of to the excluſion of all others. If his friends had not been ſo warm in his praiſe, his works would not have demanded ſo critical an inveſtigation, and he would have been accorded his own fair legitimate portion of commendation, without the neceſſity of ſhewing by compariſon how inferior he was to thoſe he is ſaid to have excelled.

In its general ſenſe, RACINE certainly did not belong to the firſt claſs of writers, which muſt be indiſpenſibly compoſed of men of original genius; nor did he more in its particular ſenſe; the art he exerciſed being of a ſecondary nature.

The claſſes of writers, particularly conſidered, may be divided into a large number; at the head of which ſtands firſt, the epic, ſecond, the dramatic, and ſoon after the lyric poet; but any number of any one of theſe particular claſſes may belong to the firſt claſs of writers, taken generally, if poſſeſſed of original genius *.

Thus RACINE, having neither poſſeſſed original

* It will be my buſineſs hereafter to enlarge upon this.

genius, nor written epic poetry, cannot generally, nor particularly, be claſſed otherwiſe than as a ſecondary writer. His labours, however, are both ingenious, and meritorious; and will enſure him a large portion of fame with all thoſe who conſider taſte and ſtyle as the ſtandard of literature; but, I believe, they are few writers who would not rather, like CORNEILLE, be eſteemed by the wiſe, admired by the judicious, and emulated by men of genius; than, like RACINE, be the criterion of the faſhionable, the wonder of the inexperienced, and the idol of the ladies.

CHAP. V.

DANCOURT, AND OTHER AUTHORS TO CREBILLON.

HAVING principally ſpoken of tragedy in the laſt chapter, in order that RACINE might be more properly before the reader, I ſhall now return to the time when DANCOURT gave a new turn to comedy; certainly an imitation of MOLIERE, but beyond all queſtion, as far as it went, in every reſpect an improvement; for, by aiming at leſs of the ARISTOPHANES, his ſatire is more general and leſs offenſive.

DANCOURT was born at FONTAINBLEAU, in 1661, he was educated under Father DE LA RUE, a Jeſuit; who finding him a young man of excellent underſtanding, did all in his power to retain him as a member of that fraternity. He, however, declared for the bar; but, finding that ſtudy too ſtraitened and dry for the vivacity and penetration of a genius like his, he finally determined for the

ſtage, where he made ſo great a progreſs, that like MOLIERE, he became director of the theatre.

Though DANCOURT brought out no leſs than fifty-two pieces, beſides ſix or eight others attributed to him, his ſubjects lie in a ſmall circle, round, which he perpetually turned. Trickſters of every deſcription he had a moſt happy knack of expoſing; and, to employ this talent, he found an inexhauſtible ſource of materials in painting the manners of middling life, and the cunning of thoſe who are kind friends and good neighbours, except upon thoſe occaſions when intereſt renders them callous to generoſity and inſenſible to good fellowſhip.

Theſe ordinary feelings and actions of mankind which pervade every order of ſociety, he moſt happily purſued even to the loweſt peaſants. If his ſcene was a village, or even a mill, the ſubtilty, with which intereſt teaches men to betray thoſe they appear to love, was no leſs refined than if his characters had been financiers, or procureurs; and, indeed, in painting ruſtic manners no man ever was ſo happy. His clowns are ſo ſimple, and ſo natural, yet ſo fine and ſo cunning, and manage their intrigues with ſuch keen dexterity, that in intereſt, a ſtateſman might envy the art and adroitneſs of BLAISE, and

in love a woman of fashion might be proud to emulate the coquettry and capriciousness of BABET.

The lightest circumstance furnished him with an idea for an entertainment. An adventure, a fashion, a proverb, became a subject of moment, dramatised by DANCOURT. His pieces are all light, but they are ingenious, regular, managed adroitly, and without embarrassment. His dialogue is natural, lively, rapid, full of gaiety, and sparkling with wit; written, five plays excepted *, which are by no means the best of his works, in prose, a strong proof of his good sense. Not that he was unequal to the task of writing poetry; for his pieces are sometimes interspersed with little songs, masques, and divertisements, which are written very neatly, and which, upon the whole, rank his genius somewhere between PRIOR and VANBRUGH; which last, whatever his obligations were to nature, was, as I shall hereafter particularize, also highly obliged to DANCOURT.

* Three of these pieces are *Le Trahison Puni*, *Madame Artus*, and *Sancho Pancò Gouverneur*. The first, which is from the Spanish, was afterwards successfully brought forward by LE SAGE, in prose. The second was a bad imitation of *Le Tartuffe*; and *Sanco* had no effect till it was, in 1762, reduced into one act by POINSINET, and assisted by the music of PHILIDOR. The other two, *Caphale et Procris*, and *La Metempsicose*, are certainly inferior to all the rest of his works.

The pieces of DANCOURT which have beſt eſtabliſhed his reputation, are *La Femme D'intrigue*, *Le Chevalier a la Mode*, *Les Bourgeoiſes a la Mode*, and the *Agioteurs*. Theſe, except the laſt, are pieces of five acts, and for conduct, truth, colouring, and ſpirit, no comedies can be better managed, nor characters drawn. His ſecondary claſs are *La Maiſon de Campaigne*, *La Pariſienne*, *Le Tuteur*, *La Foire de Bezons*, *Le Galant Jardinier*, and five or ſix others; in all which the circumſtances are ſtrong, the characters natural, and the dialogue lively and unaffected.

A third ſort are thoſe pictureſque trifles, admirable in their way, where he has availed himſelf of any temporary circumſtance. Such are *La Loterie**, *Les curieux de Compeigne* †, *Le Mari Re-*

* In this piece he ridicules all PARIS for having run after a man of the name of FAGNANI. He was a kind of a picture broker, and dealer in curioſities; and having a large ſtock of fanciful articles by him, he obtained permiſſion to ſell them by a lottery in which there were to be no blanks. This bait induced the public to take all his tickets off his hands; but it was at laſt found that nine-tenths of the prizes were inconſiderable trifles, and that every thing of value reverted to him through the channel of friends, employed for the purpoſe, and who were rewarded by him for thus playing booty.

† This piece was written in conſequence of a camp being formed near the town of COMPEIGNE, which was reviewed by LOUIS the

trouvé *, *Le Vert Galant* †, and ſeveral others. His

fourteenth; before whom a ſiege, and other military manœuvres were repreſented. The jet of the plot is to throw ſome citizens and their families into ſituations of whimſical diſtreſs, which it muſt be confeſſed DANCOURT has managed very adroitly.

* A very whimſical and extraordinary circumſtance, at that time the town talk of PARIS, induced DANCOURT to write this comedy. A perſon of the name of PIVARDIERE, having abſconded, his relations inſtituted an enquiry into the ſituation of his affairs; and, in order to poſſeſs his property, accuſed his wife of procuring perſons to aſſaſinate him. The matter was going very hard againſt her when PIVARDIERE, who had merely gone from his family upon a party of pleaſure, came back to ſet every thing to rights. The lawyers, however, determined to make a good profit of it, ſtrained every nerve to prove that PIVARDIERE was an impoſtor; and they ſo far ſucceeded, that his identity was not allowed till he had, at a great expence, brought the buſineſs before the parliament; when, having gained their point by filling their pockets, they acknowledged their error, and made a parade of doing both PIVARDIERE and his wife every poſſible juſtice.

† This piece was alſo a repreſentation of a whimſical fact. A certain Abbe made warm love to a dyer's wife; who, offended at his importunities, without heſitation informed her huſband of the honour deſigned him. It was upon this concerted between them that the huſband, in the Abbe's hearing, ſhould inform his wife that he was obliged, through buſineſs, to leave her for ſome time. The Abbe, of courſe, profitting by this good fortune, no ſooner ſaw the huſband ſet out on his journey but he redoubled his ſolicitations; and, after a great deal of affected coyneſs on her part, he prevailed on the wife to let him viſit her at ſupper. He had, however, no ſooner ſat down than the huſband thundered at the door; when, in making his eſcape, by the lady's direction, through a paſſage which led to the dye-houſe, he fell into a vat, where he floundered for a long time, and at length came out completely green from head to foot.

fourth claſs, but by no means his worſt, are pieces generally of one act, containing a neat unaffected plot, ſpiritedly begun, well followed, and roundly finiſhed. Among theſe we find *La Gazette*, *L'Opera de Village*, *Les Vendanges*, *Le Moulin de Javelle*, *Les eaux de Bourbon*, *Les Vacances*, *Colin Maillard*, and about eight more.

It has been ſaid that what REGNARD was to MOLIERE in the higher ſtyle of comedy, DANCOURT was to the ſame degree in farce. Nothing can more clearly prove his good ſenſe than this remark, for that part of MOLIERE's works which approaches neareſt to farce, is by infinite degrees his beſt; and it would have ill ſuited the bent of DANCOURT's genuis to have attempted any thing of a grander kind. As it is, by diverſifying, extending, and, indeed, improving this lighter ſpecies of dramatic amuſement, his pieces have ever been deſervedly celebrated; had he attempted any thing more he might have been reſpectable, but he never would have been popular.

It has been laid to DANCOURT's charge, that he foiſted on the public the works of other people as his own; but the ſame thing has been ſaid of every author of merit that ever exiſted. In ſupport

of these accusations against DANCOURT it is insisted that, being a manager of a theatre, and constantly in possession of a variety of new pieces, he appropriated such as he thought proper to his own use, and having kept copies of them, returned them to their different authors as improper for representation.

This assertion, however, stands upon very feeble ground indeed, and seems to have originated from that envy which, the poet tells us, pursues merit as its shadow. There is no piece of DANCOURT, let the materials be ever so slight, that is not touched with the hand of a master. How could he then reap advantage from the essays of novices? For he is not accused of robbing a single adept. Indeed the best name they can produce, and almost the only one, to corroborate this improbable assertion, is that of SAINTYON, who is suspected to be the author of *Le Chevalier a la Mode*, and *Les Bourgeoises a la Mode*—two comedies of considerable merit in point of construction the latter being almost, word for word, our admirable play of *The Confederacy*—and known to be the author of *Les Façons du Temps*, and *Danae*, two pieces which, though touched up by RICCOBONI and DOMINIQUE, and puffed by BOURSAULT'S celebrated VISE, who

was paid for his pains, were conſidered by the public as moſt contemptible productions.

Thoſe who can read with judgement will very eaſily ſee that the works of DANCOURT are uniformly written by the ſame perſon. They are collected into nine volumes with the greateſt care by his friends, who one ſhould ſuppoſe would have made theſe diſtinctions had they been neceſſary; and they bear the ſignature of DE LA MOTTE, whoſe duty it was to ſign the privilege of the king, and whoſe advice, both for the ſake of truth and out of care for the reputation of DANCOURT, whom he admired, would of courſe have been to publiſh no more than was legitimately his. I ſhall hereafter reſume DANCOURT as an actor and a manager.

REGNARD, a reſpectable writer, who is ſaid to have divided the genuis of MOLIERE with DANCOURT, certainly not only choſe the worſt and the moſt difficult part, but that to which he was unequal. The higher ſtyle of MOLIERE's comedy is in verſe, and unfortunately for REGNARD in ſuch verſe as he was incapable of writing. He did right, however, for had he choſen that part which DANCOURT improved, he would have been worſe off. VOLTAIRE, who loves to afford left handed praiſe,

ſays that he who is not pleaſed with REGNARD is not worthy to admire MOLIERE. The truth is, that had REGNARD never heard of ſuch a writer as MOLIERE, he would have been a better writer himſelf. Every man ſhould uſe his own faculties ſuch as they are, and ſcorn the ſervility of imitation *.

REGNARD, who was born of rich parents in 1657, in the early part of his life viſited many of the courts of EUROPE. In one of his voyages in the MEDITERANEAN, he was taken by a Corſair and ſold afterwards for fifteen hundred livres. His maſter carried him to CONSTANTINOPLE, where he was a long time a ſlave; finding means, however, to inform his friends of his ſituation, they paid his ranſom, and he returned to FRANCE, bringing with him his chains; which, in imitation of ÆSOP, and other

* When I call imitation ſervility, I mean that imitation by which a writer condeſcends to ape a man's ſtyle and manner; ſuch was REGNARD's imitation of MOLIERE. That broad principal upon which DANCOURT imitated MOLIERE is a very different thing, for DANCOURT had nothing of MOLIERE in his ſtyle but its general vivacity and brilliancy, dreſſed in expreſſions of his own. Beſides the characteriſtic of this imitation was that chaſte repreſentation of mind and manners, which MOLIERE imitated from the ancients, and the ancients from nature. This is what VOLTAIRE moſt admirably likens to lighting your candle by the candle of your neighbour; which candle, while it lends fire to be fed by the ſubſtance of yours, loſes nothing of its own. This remark, however, is to be found in CHAUCER.

great men, he preſerved to remind him of his former adverſity.

REGNARD, between 1688 and 1695, brought out ſix pieces at the ancient Italian theatre *. Theſe were none of thoſe in which he copied MOLIERE, but if they had been any of them they would have done him but little credit, for they were ſlimzy enough, and their ſucceſs was ſo little to the reputation of their author, or DOMINIQUE, who produced them, that there is an anecdote of his eraſing ſome of them from his ſtock catalogue.

His pieces for the French theatre, amounting to eight, have more pretenſions to merit, particularly *Le Joueur de Bal*, *Le Diſtrait*, *Democrite*, and *Les Menechmes;* but even theſe are full of de-

* It will be neceſſary once more to remind the reader that, before the regular eſtabliſhment of the Italian theatre in 1716, at the *Hotel de Bourgogne*, a company of Italians performed *au petit Bourbon* alternately with MOLIERE, and continued there, after he had removed to the *Palais Royal*, till 1697, when the theatre was pulled down to build the entrance to the *Louvre*, and the Italians were entirely diſperſed; though they might, it is ſaid, have rallied again but for a very ſingular circumſtance. GHERARDI, who was at that time the Harlequin, in one of thoſe pieces, of which he collected a large number, deſcribed the character of a prude in ſuch a manner as ſeemed to point at Madame de MAINTENON. This his enemies induſtriouſly repreſented to his diſadvantage, and his diſgrace followed of courſe.

fects; having but little original in them, and being written in dull monotonous verſe, with little energy and leſs intereſt. The *Diſtrait* makes a better figure in BRUYERE, *Democrite* is a ſtrange jumble of improbability, and *Les Menechmes*, originally from PLAUTUS, is altered very little for the better from ROTROU. Upon the whole *Le Joueur* is his beſt comedy, which has intereſt, ſituation, and character enough to give it conſequence, were it not for the negligent, heavy, and proſaic verſe in which it is written.

DUFRESNY was an author of conſiderable merit. His pieces, upwards of thirty in number, are generally an irregular jumble, careleſs, and negligent, and yet they are not without ingenuity, ſprightlineſs, and nature. Their grand fault is indecency, which, however, in FRANCE, has ſeldom impeded the ſucceſs of dramatic repreſentations of the ligher kind, nay, ſome of thoſe which have been performed on the *Boulevards*, have, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, no other merit.

It is very well known that DUFRESNY was deſcended from HENRY the fourth. That king having had an amour with a woman who was called LA BELLE JARDINIERE, the conſequence of which was the birth of DUFRESNY's grandfather. LOUIS

fourteenth did not diſſemble the fact; but, on that account, afforded him his particular countenance and protection.

It is aſtoniſhing how variouſly gifted this man was, and yet how little he knew. He had a taſte for poetry, painting, ſculpture, architecture, and agriculture; but his great delight was muſic; and, though nothing could beat into him the ſmalleſt comprehenſion of its theoretical principles, yet he made many melodies, which are printed at the end of his works, and which evince a muſical mind if he had known how to have put it into action. His method was when he had invented his tune to ſing it to GRANDVAL, who as well as an actor was a muſician, after which GRANDVAL wrote it down and added the accompanyments.

As extraordinary things are ſaid of his knowledge of deſign; in which he uſed no pencil, nor crayon, but a pair of ſciſſars, faſhioning every kind of animate and inanimate object with the moſt critical ſymetry and taſte. Models for ſculpture he formed in the ſame extemporaneous manner with clay and wax; and his knowledge of agriculture, which he is very gravely ſaid to have inherited from

his great grandmother, was, both as to ornament and utility, uncommonly great and extenſive.

The gardens of MIGNAUX, near POISSY, thoſe in the FAUXBOURG, SAINT ANTOINE, called *Du Moulin* and *Le Chemin Creux*, thoſe of the Abbe PAJOT, near DE VINCENNES, are proofs of his ſuperior taſte and judgement in this ſtudy. LOUIS the fourteenth, determined to make the gardens at VERSAILLES ſurpaſs in grandeur and magnificence every thing of that kind ſeen before, ſubmitted his plan to DUFRESNY, who ſuggeſted many material alterations with which the king was greatly pleaſed; but objected to them on account of the prodigious expence that would be incurred had the plan been carried into execution. He, however, to ſhew DUFRESNY how much he admired his ſpirit and taſte, made him controller of his gardens.

This projector afterwards was at the head of a glaſs manufactory which had prodigious ſucceſs. With all theſe fortunate advantages, however, DUFRESNY was always behindhand. This induced him, when he had brought this manufactory to perfection, to ſell his concern in it for a very moderate ſum, which circumſtance coming to the ears of the king, he obliged thoſe who had taken advantage of his

neceſſity and ingenuity to allow him three thouſand livres a year. His extravagance, however, knew no bounds, and it was not long before he agreed with his partners to give up the annuity for a given ſum, on which the king was heard to ſay, "that the public treaſury would not content DUFRESNY *."

Many of his dramatic pieces, only two of which *L'eſprit de Contradiction*, and *Le Lot Suppoſé*, ſucceeded in his life time, have been revived at different times either at the Italian theatre, or the Fairs; but though the major part of them are printed in his works, they have now been baniſhed the theatre for many years.

* It is DUFRESNY at whom LE SAGE points the following paſſage in the *Diable Boiteux*. "I'll ſend you alſo," ſays the Devil, "an old bachelor of a good family, who the moment he has a ducat "ſpends it, and who rather than be without one is capable of doing "any thing to obtain it. A fortnight ago his waſherwoman, to "whom he was indebted thirty piſtoles, came to dun him for the "money, and told him that ſhe was going to be married to a Valet "de Chambre, and wanted that ſum to make up her portion. What "then you are rich, ſaid he; it muſt be ſo, for where the devil is the "valet de chambre who would take you with thirty piſtoles? Rich! "ay, to be ſure, ſaid ſhe, beſides your thirty piſtoles I have two "hundred ducats. Two hundred ducats! cried he, with emotion, "a good round ſum. I'll tell you what, ſend the valet de chambre "to the devil, marry me, and we ſhall be quit all round. Would "you believe it? Tempted by the ducats, he has made his waſher-"woman his wife."

Poisson, whom I shall speak of here only as an author, brought forward, between 1661 and 1680, nine pieces, seven of which are each in one act, one is in five acts, and the other in three. It is not so much the number of pieces, or their estimation, in point of weight and consequence, that entitles the performances of Poisson to particular mention here, as the simplicity and nature in their style by which they are distinguished.

His personages are, like those of Dancourt, chosen from the middle order of society, whose tone and language he has happily caught; and, though it must be confessed that his pieces are feeble, on the side of invention, they are designed with that intelligence, and executed with that facility, which evince judgement and experience in their author.

He is considered as the inventor of the character of Crispin, and these pieces are evidently written to support that character, which he always performed himself. Its outline is light pleasantry, insinuating flattery, perpetual importunity, one who meddles with every thing, is attached to nothing, and who seems more interested in proportion as the circumstance is contemptible. These qualities he has woven into his pieces and characterized by in-

numerable tints and ſhades to ſhew off the fineſſe of his acting, in which he was ſuppoſed to excel all other performers. *La Fou de Qualité*, which he dedicated to LANGELY, the fool of LOUIS the fourteenth, *Les Faux Muſcovites**, and two or three others, may rank fairly by the ſide of thoſe pieces written by DANCOURT. I ſhall hereafter ſpeak of POISSON as an actor.

The pieces of LE NOBLE are of ſo little celebrity that I ſhould paſs over that author entirely but for the rank in literature he otherwiſe held, and for thoſe ſtrange adventures which aroſe out of his ſingular conduct.

LE NOBLE was born at TROYES, in 1643, of a family of diſtinction, and was given, entirely through his merit, a charge of procureur general of the

* This piece was written upon a particular occaſion. After POTEMSKIN, and ROMANZOFF, ambaſſadors from MUSCOVY, had made their entrance into PARIS, being the firſt of their nation that ever viſited FRANCE in that capacity, every public place of courſe made grand preparations for their reception; and, among the reſt, the theatres. The *Hotel de Bourgogne*, however, had not the honour of their preſence, for, after a variety of promiſes and appointments, they had their audience of leave without viſiting that place of amuſement. POISSON in revenge ſaid, that as they could not have the real Muſcovites, he would introduce falſe ones. The idea tickled the public, and the piece had great ſucceſs.

parliament of METZ. He enjoyed for some years a brilliant reputation and a large fortune, when he was all of a sudden accused of forgery, conveyed to the *Chatelet*, and condemned to make *amende honorable*, and to be banished for nine years. He appealed against the sentence, merely to gain time, and in the mean while he was committed to the *Conçergerie*.

GABRIELLE PERREAU, known by the name of LA BELLE EPICIERE, was at that time in the same prison, where she had been sent by her husband for infidelity and other ill conduct. She was handsome, and LE NOBLE, not insensible of her charms, undertook to be her advocate. She in return was not ungrateful. A handsome man, with a lively and sensible imagination, and who spoke and wrote to admiration, was the very object to her mind. They lived together upon the most familiar terms till an apprehension of a living witness of their intercourse obliged them to take measures to prevent a discovery.

LE NOBLE had prolonged the proceedings with great address both against her and himself; and, upon this emergency, he managed that she should be received into a convent to lie in as a pensioner. In this situation he concerted his measures so cun-

ningly that when ſhe was able to go out, he evaded the vigilence of his keepers and retired to an obſcure part of PARIS, where ſhe ſoon joined him, firſt leaving the child behind her as a preſent to the holy ſiſters of the convent. They were ſoon routed, obliged to leave PARIS, and lived for ſome years an errant and a vagrant life, during which time the lady brought him two more children.

At length he was taken, again put into priſon, and immediately condemned to make the *amende honorable* in the chamber of the *Chatelet*, and to be baniſhed the kingdom for nine years, and at the ſame time his lady's cauſe was determined, which deciſion releaſed her huſband from all charge upon her account, and obliged LE NOBLE to provide for her and her three children. What degree of ignominious puniſhment he ſuſtained we are not told, but one ſhould ſuppoſe it was as ſlight as the nature of the circumſtance would admit, for he was permitted after a ſhort baniſhment to return to FRANCE, where he figured away with incredible reputation as a writer.

His troubles, however, had no power to reſtrain his irregularities. He continued incorrigible the whole of his life, and, at length, died in conſequence of his diſſipation, at the age of ſixty eight, and was

buried at the expence of the pariſh, after having gained the bookſellers a hundred thouſand crowns. His works, which are publiſhed in twenty volumes, are upon various ſubjects, and generally well written. Among them are to be found four dramatic pieces; which, like thoſe of FONTENELLE, and LA FONTAINE, ſeem to have been more the fruits of leiſure hours than the employment of that time which he devoted to the aſſiſtance of his literary reputation. Their titles are *Eſope*, *Les Deux Arlequins*, *Thaleſtris*, and *Le Fourbe*.

The ſwarm of inferior authors who infeſted the theatres and inundated the public about this period, every one a MOLIERE in imagination, I ſhall neither have room, nor have I inclination to introduce. I cannot, however, paſs by BRUEYS and PALAPRAT, who wrote in conjunction ſeveral pieces for the theatre. BRUEYS was born in PROVENCE, in 1640, and was bred up a Calvaniſt. He made himſelf remarkable early in life by writing againſt BOSSUET's *Expoſition de la Foi*. That prelate in combating his reaſons converted him, and when he had become a Roman Catholic he was altogether as zealous againſt the Proteſtants as he had been formerly ſtrenuous in their favour. He was, however, ill calculated for diſputes of this kind, and, therefore, left theology for the theatre.

PALAPRAT was born at TOULOUSE, in 1650. As a poet he had a lively and pleaſant imagination, and as a man he was candid, ingenuous, and unoffending. Alike unconſcious of his philanthropy, or his wit, he was kind to others for his own gratification, and he delighted the world while he thought he was inſtructing himſelf; thus if THEMISTOCLES aſked, when his hearers laughed, if he had ſaid a fooliſh thing, PALAPRAT might have aſked with the ſame ſimplicity as his hearers admired him, "What have "I ſaid worthy of attention."

The ſimilitude of diſpoſitions and merit in BRUEYS and PALAPRAT pointed them out to each other as proper aſſociates in literature. They brought out, in conjunction, a great number of pieces. *Le Grondeur* is ſaid to be ſuperior to any thing in MOLIERE. This, however, is ſaying too much of it, though it cannot be denied that it is full of whimſical pleaſantry and well conducted intrigue. *Le Muet* is imitated from the *Eunuch* of TERENCE, but certainly written with much more warmth than its model. *L'Important de Cour*, which neither wants fire nor humour, is however wrongly named; for the principal character is not by any means a perſon of importance, but a pityful provincial pretender,

who awkwardly apes courtly manners without underſtanding them.

Le Force du Sang, *L'Opiniatre*, *Les Empyriques*, *Les Quiproquo*, and *Les Embarras du derriere du Theatre*, have all ſome pleaſant paſſages. *L'Opiniatre* is in verſe, and, therefore, hard and dry, and though full of action, it has no humour. The principal character is a mere chalk drawing. Upon the whole *L'avocat Patelin* is the beſt piece produced by theſe aſſociates, and is a meritorious attempt to reſtore the ancient farce originally invented by the *Children* of *Sans Souci*, and greatly encouraged at the time of FRANCIS the firſt, and which, without doubt, MOLIERE had frequently in his eye *.

Theſe are the moſt material of thoſe pieces which

* The ancient French farces, having a diſtinct character of their own, and being unlike thoſe of any other nation, will hereafter demand particular notice, eſpecially as they involve a variety of ſingular and whimſical circumſtances. *L'avocat Patelin* is no more than one of thoſe farces modernized. It is a ſort of dramatic proverb, and meant to expreſs in action the ſenſe of the old adage, "the rogue a "rogue and a half." It was originally written in the reign of FRANCIS the firſt, by PIERRE PATHELIN, to expoſe on the ſtage that ſtanding diſh the chicanery of lawyers; and, therefore, called by BRUEYS and PALAPRAT, *L'avocat Patelin*, a term ſignifying a trickſter, and no doubt incorporated into the French language from PATHELIN, exactly as we have ſeen *Turlupinade* from TURLUPIN.

were brought out by these friends, for friends they strictly were; induced, one would think, by a remarkable parity in their genius, dispositions, habits, and manners, nay, even their bodily infirmities, which rendered them a constant prey to doctors, and particularly to the nephew of BRUEYS, a man of medical celebrity*. Thus equal in reputation, in simplicity, and in credulity, they lived upon the kindest terms for many years. At length, not without strong regret on both sides, they parted. PALAPRAT followed the fortune of VENDÔME into ITALY, and BRUEYS retired to MONTPELIER, where he died at the age of eighty-three, having survived his friend only a year.

* They were both remarkably short-sighted, and one day when the king, who was very partial to BRUEYS, asked him how his eyes were; he answered, "I humbly thank your majesty, my nephew, "SIDORRE, says that I see a little better."

CHAP. VI.

CREBILLON AND THE STATE OF TRAGEDY TO VOLTAIRE.

CREBILLON, who ſtands at the head of thoſe dramatic writers that immediately ſucceeded RACINE, now claims our attention; he being the only author who knew how to make advantage of the occaſion that then preſented itſelf of emulating the reputation of CORNEILLE and RACINE, without imitating either of them.

CREBILLON was born at DIJON, of an ancient and noble family, in 1674, and died at PARIS in 1762. He was intended by nature to purſue in literature a career of his own, which was the more fortunate for him as CORNEILLE had appropriated to himſelf the majeſty, and RACINE the tenderneſs of tragedy. He diſdained to follow their ſteps, perhaps leſs impelled by choice than compulſion; genius ſeldom balances; it decides. It projects leſs than it executes.

CREBILLON, determined to chuſe a ſure road, ſtruck into the path that ÆSCHYLUS had trod before him; which he purſued with a ſtrength and a regularity that ÆSCHYLUS never knew. His ſtyle was all nerve, all force; it had neither the elevation of CORNEILLE, nor the elegance of RACINE. He preferred aſtoniſhment to admiration, ſtrength to harmony, and his male and vigorous pencil ſeldom drew any but terrible objects. It was a tyrant who, while he exacted your obedience, made you tremble in his preſence.

CREBILLON's firſt tragedy, *Idoménée*, was brought out in 1705. The public balanced at the bold ſtyle in which it was written, and complained againſt the fifth act. It was withdrawn and a new fifth act written, when its ſucceſs was prodigious *.

Atree et Thyeſte, produced in 1707, gave CREBILLON's reputation ſtronger footing. Nevertheleſs the boldneſs of his ſtyle induced the audience on the firſt night to pauſe on its merits. It was impoſſible to blame, but they knew not to what degree to applaud judiciouſly †. It

* BOILEAU, who never could be quiet, ſaid, that this tragedy ſeemed as if written by RACINE when he was drunk.

† CREBILLON uſed to relate to his friends, that after the firſt

grew, however, on the public and became a great favourite.

Electre came out in 1708, with much reputation, but *Radamiſte et Zenobie*, liſted the fame of CREBILLON to that height where it has ever ſince deſervedly been placed. It is certainly one of the *chef d'œuvres* of the French theatre, and the aſtoniſhing ſucceſs it met with was greatly its due *. In his next piece, *Xerxes*, brought forward in 1714, he was leſs happy. It had but one repreſentation. When it was over he aſked for the parts from the actors and burnt them before their faces, ſaying, "I "was in the wrong, the public have undeceived "me." There is good writing in this piece, but the author killed almoſt all the characters; a circum-

repreſentation of this piece, he encountered an Engliſh gentleman in a coffee houſe, who paid him many compliments on his tragedy, of which he doubted the ſincerity, as the piece was then hanging in a dubious ſtate. "Sir," ſaid CREBILLON, "I am afraid you are pre-"mature in your praiſes." "What do you mean?" ſaid the other, "becauſe of your irreſolute audience of laſt night? Entirely in "your favour, depend upon it. Your play is written for the me-"ridian of LONDON and not of PARIS. Here they learn patriotiſm, "in LONDON they know it by heart."

* BOILEAU, who was then on his death bed, could not, nevertheleſs, reſiſt his blended propenſity of ill nature and injuſtice. Having read *Radamiſte et Zenobie*, "take away this bulderdaſh," ſaid he, "the race of the PRADONS were eagles compared to the "groveling CREBILLONS. Take it away; it encreaſes my malady."

ſtance at which the French have always with juſtice revolted.

Semiramis came out in 1717. This is the play which, as we ſhall hereafter ſee, VOLTAIRE took for the model of his tragedy under that title, and which induced ſo many ſquibs and epigrams at his expence. It had conſiderable ſucceſs when CREBILLON firſt produced it. *Pyrrhus*, performed in 1762, was a tragedy written upon a new model; and, therefore, did not greatly ſucceed. CREBILLON had been reproached with introducing ſo much cruelty on the ſtage, that he, therefore, reſolved to try his hand at tenderneſs. We are told he worked for five years at this tragedy, and, at laſt, though it had its particular merits, the audience gave but little credit to them, becauſe written by a man who, inſtead of the pathetic, had been accuſtomed to produce the terrible.

As *Catalina*, CREBILLON's next piece, was not produced till 1748, at which time he might be conſidered as cotemporary with VOLTAIRE, I remit a further account of him till that time; when, as far as it may be neceſſary, I ſhall alſo notice his ſon.

LONGEPIERRE, who was celebrated for three tragedies under the titles of *Medée*, *Electre*, and

Seſoſtris, was a proof how extremely difficult authors found it to ſteer, like CREBILLON, wide of CORNEILLE and RACINE, and yet ſucceed. Searching for the beauties of SOPHOCLES and EURIPIDES, they forgot the age in which they were writing. *Medée*, which is ſaid to have been ſuperior to CORNEILLE, is full of declamation, cold, unequal, and prolix. *Electre*, from which piece, however, VOLTAIRE has not diſdained to borrow ſome circumſtances in his *Oreſte*, is a Greek dreſſed in a French habit, a ſtatue of PRAXITELES diſfigured by a modern bungler; and, as for *Seſoſtris*, it was performed but once, and was never printed *.

---

* There is a curious anecdote of RACINE relative to this piece. He wrote an epigram—for which the following lines may ſerve as a tranſlation—immediately after the failure of *Seſoſtris*, which came out three years after his *Athalie*.

EPIGRAM.

The famous SESOSTRIS, that valiant chief,
Who the fates mighty EGYPT permitted to ſway;
Who there lived a round age, and then died for their grief,
To the joy of all PARIS, lived here but a day.

It was RACINE's foible now and then to diſtil from his pen a little of BOILEAU's gall; and, having fancied that he had here made a good hit, he circulated theſe lines as generally as he could; but hearing that LONGEPIERRE had written a parallel between him and CORNEILLE, and completely given him the victory, he induſtriouſly collected the copies back again, and did every thing in his power to prevent his being known as the author.

La Grange Chancel, who wrote with conſiderable celebrity, would have enſured himſelf a more brilliant fame had he not ſervilely followed Racine, who, indeed, was his preceptor in the art of letters; if it be not a profanation to call that an art which is incapable of being taught by any other preceptor than nature.

La Grange was born near Perigueux, in 1676, and he died at Paris, in 1760, having rendered himſelf remarkable for employing his pen from nine years old till within two years of his death. Having been puffed up with early ſucceſs, he ventured at ſome indiſcreet ſatires, for which he was confined in the Iſlands of Saint Marguerite, whence, after a year, he contrived to eſcape; and, by means of friends which he conjured up wherever he went, he was kindly received by the king of Sardinia, and afterwards he rendered himſelf uſeful to the king of Spain.

The Spaniſh nobles, jealous of this diſtinction, planned his deſtruction, and it was with the utmoſt difficulty he eſcaped aſſaſſination. Finding that Spain was no place for him, he embarked for Amsterdam. There he procured an introduction to

the Ambaſſador of AUGUSTUS, king of POLAND, who finding him full of political intelligence, took him to POLAND at his return, where AUGUSTUS invited him to his court and made him conſiderable preſents.

After the death of thoſe he had ſatirized, who had been his perſecutors in FRANCE, he ventured to return to his native country. The miniſters of ſtate very ſoon courted his alliance, knowing that the intelligence he muſt have gathered by his intimate knowledge of the affairs of foreign courts would render him of infinite ſervice to them in the proſecution of their views. This party he readily embraced and, after that, he lived ſafe, favoured, and opulent.

His writings, which are full of genius and inexperience, are a mixture of temerity and fear. Every thing is ventured, nothing prepared. Love and hatred, fury and moderation, are violently dragged in without motive or management. Inſults are committed and pardoned, anger is kindled and extinguiſhed, nobody knows why. Soaring after the ſublime he ſeizes the bombaſt; and ſtudying for the beautiful he is loſt in the bathos. His grandeur is burleſque, and his ſimplicity puerility.

The ſeverity of theſe truths, however, would not have attached to the writings of La Grange, had he like Crebillon diſdained imitation. His firſt piece *Adherbal*, brought out in 1694, and written when he was only fourteen years of age, is ſpoken of as an aſtoniſhing attempt for ſuch a youth, and very probably he might have claimed the merit of an original writer had he not ſuffered his fancy, at that tender ſeaſon when the mind takes and retains impreſſions, to be ſo cramped and lamed as to have little power afterwards to exerciſe its natural functions*.

* "When I had put the finiſhing ſtroke," ſays La Grange, "to this tragedy, I hazarded the liberty of preſenting it to the "Princeſſe de Conti; who in ſpight of all its faults, found ſome- "thing in it ſo worthy her attention that ſhe ſent for the celebrated "Racine and entreated him to read this eſſay, theſe were her words, "of a young gentleman who was her page, and to give him his "advice without diſguiſe. Racine kept the piece eight days and "then informed the Princeſs that he had read my tragedy with "aſtoniſhment; and though it was very defective in many places, "if I would permit him to give me a few leſſons, he had no doubt "but in a ſhort time it would be in ſuch a ſtate as to appear with "ſucceſs. I did not fail to call on him every day for a conſiderable "while, and may fairly ſay that I learnt more from him than from "all the books I had ever read."

Here it is evident that La Grange took leave of nature to ſtudy art in the ſchool of Racine; juſt as painters become manneriſts and are never afterwards capable of improvement. Going on he tells

Three years afterwards, was produced *Oreſte et Pilade*, which is ſaid to have been written by La Grange from a plan drawn by Racine. It was performed a few nights and then kept back on account of the death of the celebrated Champmele, after which it was wholly withdrawn.

In 1699, appeared *Meleagre*, which, however, ſucceeded but indifferently, and in the ſame year he brought forward *Athenais*, which piece was attacked by Le Noble and others, and warmly defended by its author; and the little ſucceſs it had ſeems to have ſprung from this controverſy.

Amaſis in 1701, *Alceſte* in 1703, *Ino et Melicerte* in 1713, and *Sophoniſbe* in 1716, are all the remainder of thoſe pieces written by La Grange before Voltaire. *Amaſis* was violently attacked, and it muſt be confeſſed was very vulnerable; *Alceſte* was ſaid to be no more than a plan from Racine filled up by La Grange—indeed we are

---

you that the piece came out, that he ſat at its firſt repreſentation with the Prince de Conti who ſaid that the author's age would ſilence the tongue of criticiſm, and that under this influence the piece had wonderful ſucceſs. The circumſtance at any rate is not wonderful, for patronage would at that time do any thing with the public, and we have ſeen the ſilly Prädon atchieve greater feats even againſt Racine, through influence of a much inferior kind.

told that RACINE left in the poſſeſſion of LA GRANGE many of thoſe plans, ſome of which were partly written in proſe, and thoſe fragments which are publiſhed in his works lend probability to the report—*Ino et Melicerte* had no ſucceſs, and *Sophoniſbe* is remembered by nothing but four remarkable lines*.

LA FOSSE attempted what CREBILLON afterwards perfected. Like him he had a ſtrong mind; full of grandeur and dignity; but probably, fearing to attack ſo revolting a ſtyle of writing as terror, which requires more ſtrength and furor than majeſty and tenderneſs, and is yet ſubordinate to both, he ſtrove in vain to imitate ÆSCHYLUS; till, finding how difficult it is to be original, he at length contented himſelf with copying CORNEILLE as ſervilely as LA GRANGE had copied RACINE; ſo that, during the interval between CAMPISTRON and CREBILLON, tragedy languiſhed under the

* As theſe lines are ſaid to be worth all the reſt of this author's works, and certainly are uncommonly fine, admitting the ſentiment they contain, I have tranſcribed them.

Songez qu'il eſt des tems ou tout eſt legitime
Et que, ſi la Patrie avoit beſoin d'un crime
Qui puis ſeul relever ſon eſpoir abattu,
Il ne ſeroit plus crime et deviendroit vertu.

feeble ſupport of theſe ſhadows of two men, one of whom had given it life and vigour, and the other poliſh and refinement.

La Fosse wrote four tragedies, in which it is plain to be ſeen that Corneille was the *Phœbus* to whom he condeſcended to become the *Phæton*. Theſe tragedies were called *Polixene*, brought out in 1696, *Manlius Capitolinus* in 1698, *Theſee* in 1700, and *Coréſus* in 1703. Of all which plays it has been ſaid, but of *Manlius Capitolinus* in particular, that Corneille might not have been aſhamed of being known as the author; but this is going a great deal too far; for, though they contain many paſſages that reflect a reſpectability on the writer, they are upon the whole heavy, dull, and unintereſting; and evince the certain painful, difficult, and unfruitful reſult of their purſuits, who fetter genius, and ſtudy to be natural.

Both La Grange, and La Fosse, owe their reputation, ſuch as it was, and conſequently the notice taken of them here, to the adventitious circumſtance of appearing at a time when they could comfortably conſider themſelves reſpectively as repreſentatives of Corneille, and Racine, merely becauſe they had no formidable opponent. And now, unleſs I were to ſubſtitute writings for literature, and

names for merit, I see nothing to prevent my coming immediately to that remarkable era in French dramatics when the united abilities of so many men of great and extraordinary talents brought the stage in that country into decided reputation in all its various branches under the powerful influence of VOLTAIRE.

CHAP. VII.

STATE OF THE FRENCH THEATRE ON TO THE YEAR 1730.

FLUCTUATING, timid, irresolute, and unsettled, as the French stage was at this period, nothing, perhaps, could have raised its reputation to any pitch of excellence but the appearance of the only man who seemed born to render his country that service. Tragedy had been thitherto considered under three distinct heads; the grand, the tender, and the terrible; and these had separately been carried as far as possible by CORNEILLE, RACINE, and CREBILLON. No man had dreamt that the French had never seen a real tragedy, a species of production which to be perfect must involve a union of these three great essentials, till VOLTAIRE, born with little genius, and less intuition, but endowed with a judgment almost equal to the happiest efforts of both, plainly shewed not only the practicability but the necessity of this measure, by fairly stepping be-

fore his three celebrated countrymen, and building a lasting reputation for himself with the valuable materials they had left behind them.

It cannot, however, be denied that his fame is fair, honest, and legitimate; for though, had these authors never lived, he would have been at a loss how to have exercised those talents which had not been given to inspire him with invention, though greatly to perfect the inventions of others; as he possessed himself of the essence of their respective merits, as those merits were rendered more brilliant in his hands, their appropriation more respectable, and as those he added gave them a consequence and a rank they had not been able to support alone, we cannot refuse him the praise due to exertions so highly meritorious.

But this is not all the length justice obliges us to go. VOLTAIRE added to tragedy a colouring, a harmony, a fire, a variety, till then unknown to it. He did more. The tragic poets had contented themselves with rendering vice odious; he rendered virtue amiable. His productions are the panegyric of humanity, and his moral appeals to all hearts.

I.

VOLTAIRE was born at PARIS, November 30, 1694. He brought out on the French theatre

twenty-eight plays, five of which appeared during the interval that will occupy this chapter. The firſt of theſe, performed in 1718, was *Oedipe*. The ſucceſs of this tragedy was brilliant beyond all example. He had, however, great difficulty to get it accepted by the actors, and he ſubmitted to alter it out of compliment to their opinion ſeveral times, whether for the better or the worſe cannot now be diſcovered; but it was conſidered very complete in all its requiſites when it did appear *.

Artémire produced in 1720, had no ſucceſs, and was withdrawn by its author ſo ſuddenly and ſo

---

* Many anecdotes are related of the effect this tragedy had on different perſons. Marſhal VILLARS told VOLTAIRE that he conſidered *Œdipe* as an obligation he had conferred on his country. "A "very inconſiderable one," ſaid VOLTAIRE, "in compariſon with "the ſmalleſt of thoſe that you have conferred on your country." Another time, a nobleman, who was handing a lady to her carriage after one of the repreſentations of this piece, ſaid to VOLTAIRE, "ſee what you have done. Do you know that you have drawn a "torrent of tears from theſe beautiful eyes?" "They'll have their "revenge my lord," ſaid VOLTAIRE. The Duke D'ORLEANS, who had ſent VOLTAIRE to the Baſtile, on ſeeing *Œdipe*, ſent immediately to releaſe him. The poet went inſtantly to thank the Prince. "Be more prudent for the future VOLTAIRE," ſaid he, "and I'll "watch over your fortune." "I humbly thank your Royal High-"neſs," ſaid VOLTAIRE, "and ſhall conſider myſelf greatly ho-"noured by your generoſity, provided you don't furniſh me with "board and lodging again."

completely ſuppreſſed, that ſolicitous as the publiſhers of VOLTAIRE's works have been to collect his whole writings, bad and good, it is not known exactly what ſhape it wore upon its firſt repreſentation. The moſt material parts of it, however, were afterwards taken into *Mariamne*, which was performed for the firſt time in 1724. This piece did not ſucceed to any great degree the firſt ſeaſon, but when it was altered and brought forward on the following year under the title of *Herode et Mariamne*, it experienced very ſolid and confirmed ſucceſs *.

* This piece was the ſource of the quarrels between VOLTAIRE and ROUSSEAU. ROUSSEAU wrote a letter to a friend which accidently, or, perhaps, by connivance, fell into VOLTAIRE's hand. This was the ſubſtance of it: "I have at laſt had the pleaſure of "conſidering at my eaſe this marvellous dramatic ſuperfetation, "this ſecond delivery of an abortion, taken again into the womb of "of its mother to receive freſh nouriſhment. The formation, how-"ever, does not appear yet to me to be regular, and I can diſcern "nothing from the head to the tail but a number of disjointed and "monſtrous parts inſtead of a perfect and complete whole. In ſhort "it is impoſſible to reconcile this farago with common ſenſe. *Ma-"riamne* is an inanimate doll that does not know what it does, nor "what it wants; *Varus* is a hairbrain, who takes his meaſures as "ſtupidly on the Banks of the JORDAN as the DANUBE; *Herode*, "with his politics, is the ſilliеſt fellow of the whole troop; *Salome*, "a miſerable raſcal who merits exemplary puniſhment; and *Mazael*, "a clumſy rogue who ſo far from accommodating himſelf to the "intentions of his maſter ſo injures and diſappoints them, that "*Herode*, if he was not as mad as the author, ought to confine him "within four walls." He thus goes on at great length, minutely

The next piece of VOLTAIRE was *L'Indiſcret*, a comedy in one act and in proſe. Its ſucceſs is not known. It was very probably written from ſome complimentary motive, and with no great view to fame. Nothing more appeared of this author till 1730, when he brought out *Brutus**. In this tragedy VOLTAIRE completely overſhot his mark. Fired with the ſpirit of Engliſh liberty, which with ſo much adulation he had in ENGLAND defined to be a medium between tyranny and democracy, and which the Romans attempted but never could attain, its eſſence ſo evaporated in his paſſage from DOVER to CALAIS, that in *Brutus*, written avowedly to promulgate the principles of Britiſh patriotiſm, he introduced all the levelling ſentiments of a republic, and expected the French to tolerate, under

---

taking the play to pieces with great humour and ability, and then finiſhes by ſaying, that when the conſtruction and the writing are fairly eſtimated, it is impoſſible to ſay whether the author has ſinned moſt againſt reaſon or rhime.

* It is very material to notice that when VOLTAIRE brought out this tragedy he had juſt returned from England; where—ſpight of his affected indifference for the Engliſh poets, his rank and jealous abuſe of SHAKESPEAR, whoſe genius was beyond his comprehenſion, his unfair judgment of OTWAY, ſinking him below RACINE, than whom he certainly wrote infinitely better—he learnt in what way to riſe in the dramatic art ſuperior to the beſt of his countrymen. This remains for ſubſequent diſcuſſion.

a deſpotic monarch, what would have revolted the Engliſh under a limitted one.

The conſequence was that the *parterre* expreſſed, at the firſt repreſentation of this piece, the loudeſt indignation; and, when they heard the following lines from the mouth of TITUS,

> Je ſuis fils de BRUTUS. et je porte, en mon cœur,
> La liberte gravee, et les Rois en horreur,

there was a general tumult. The piece, however, had its partizans, and thoſe it offended contented themſelves with barely ſtaying away from it. It, nevertheleſs, ſo injured the reputation of VOLTAIRE that he did not recover it till he brought out *Zaire*, which might be called the firſt complete tragedy in all its parts ever performed on the French ſtage.

As I mean to draw up the moſt celebrated of thoſe numerous authors who at this time attracted the notice of the public, and make them paſs along in the view of the reader, I ſhall follow up VOLTAIRE with DE LA MOTTE, a man of great genius, and a moſt finiſhed poet.

DE LA MOTTE wrote for the French theatre, the Italian theatre, and for the opera, and always

reſpectably; but his poetic works, and particularly his odes, gave his fame the moſt ſubſtantial and permanent confirmation. He was born at PARIS in 1674. and died in 1731; ſo that his whole public hiſtory may come in here.

DE LA MOTTE from his earlieſt youth had a ſtrong propenſity to poetry, and a remarkable talent for declamation. This induced him to get by heart every thing that was celebrated, in which he was aſſiſted by a memory ſo quick and ſo tenacious, that facts are averred of its effects almoſt beyond credibility *.

---

* Among many inſtances adduced to prove that DE LA MOTTE in point of memory was a ſort of prodigy, the following is particularly worthy of notice. A young poet repeated in a large company a tragedy which he had written. DE LA MOTTE, who was preſent, liſtened with great attention, and, when he had heard it out, told the young gentleman that it certainly had conſiderable merit, but that he was ſorry to find him ſo great a plagiariſt. The poet teſtified aſtoniſhment at this aſſertion. "This is well acted," ſaid DE LA MOTTE, "but to convince you that I am right, I will now "repeat to you the whole of the ſecond ſcene in the fourth act." This he inſtantly did; and in a manner as animated as if he himſelf had written it. The eyes of all the company were now turned on the young poet, who, thrown into a moſt awkward embarraſſment, knew not what to ſay; when DE LA MOTTE took him by the hand, ſaying, "Don't give yourſelf any concern young gentleman; the "ſcene in queſtion is yours as well as the reſt of the piece; but it "appeared to me ſo beautiful, and ſo affecting, that I irreſiſtibly got "it by heart as you repeated it."

De la Motte was an extraordinary character. He had ſcarcely made himſelf known but, without any apparent cauſe, he all of a ſudden retired to the monaſtry of De la Trappe; but the celebrated Abbe Du Rance, unwilling to deprive the world of a young man of ſuch promiſe, refuſed him the habit under a pretence that he was too young to ſuſtain all the rigid and ſevere diſcipline of that auſtere order. After this he attached himſelf to the theatre, not without ſome caſuiſtical qualms as to the propriety of how far his conduct was reconcileable to the duty of a true chriſtian.

But his conduct all through life was, it muſt be confeſſed, fanciful and irreſolute. Having paſſed a long ſeries of years in compoſing moſt beautiful verſe, he finiſhed by decrying poetry as an unnatural ſpecies of writing. He compared verſifiers to ſlight-of-hand-men, who paſs grains of millet through the eye of a needle, in which exploit there is no other merit than the difficulty; and, to prove the truth of this aſſertion, he turned his tragedy of *Oedipe* into proſe, which he had before written in verſe. This, however, drew on him a volley of epigrams which he was too much a philoſopher to anſwer, though the beſt of them was infinitely below the worſt of his poetry; but I

ſhall wind up his character after I have enumerated his pieces.

The tragedies of DE LA MOTTE are *Machabees*, performed in 1721, *Romulus*, in 1722, *Ines de Caſtro*, in 1723, and *Oedipe*, in 1726. When DE LA MOTTE produced *Machabees*, he kept himſelf aloof as the author. In conſequence of this the play was immediately attributed to RACINE; but as the truth got wind, thoſe wiſe critics gradually pretended that upon maturer conſideration they had found, by comparing one author with the other, that it could be written by nobody but DE LA MOTTE*.

Romulus was greatly ſucceſsful, and excited much curioſity, both from the public and the different authors. Parodies, at the Italian theatre, and the fairs, were at that time the teſt of dramatic ſucceſs. *Romulus* was parodied at the Italians by DOMINIQUE, under the title of *Arlequin Romulus*,

* ROUSSEAU was one of thoſe who had been deceived. He excuſed himſelf by ſaying that, as there were no points, no flowery ideas, no flights, no fineſſe in this tragedy, he had conceived that it was impoſſible it ſhould be written by DE LA MOTTE. ROUSSEAU probably had forgotten that DE LA MOTTE knowing perfectly the different properties of lyric odes, and other fanciful poetry, he alſo knew the properties of tragedy.

and at the puppet ſhew by LE SAGE and FUZELIER, by the name of *Pierrot Romulus*. The parodies, however, were damned, and the ſucceſs of the tragedy confirmed.

Inés de Caſtro had ſtill greater ſucceſs than *Romulus*. Never piece attracted ſo many ſpectators and ſo much criticiſm*. It is written in verſe, but certainly too proſaic; for DE LA MOTTE, though he complied with the cuſtom of other writers, could never reconcile to himſelf that characters on a theatre ought to addreſs each other in any other ſtyle of language than that in which, according to their rank, they uſually ſpeak†.

Oedipe, which piece DE LA MOTTE wrote in

* DE LA MOTTE being one day at a coffee-houſe, he preſently heard a knot of theſe critics abuſe his play; when, finding that he was unknown to them, he joined heartily in abuſing it himſelf. At length, after they were altogether pretty well glutted with decrying its merits, "What ſhall we do with ourſelves for the evening?" ſaid one. "Suppoſe," ſaid DE LA MOTTE, "we go to the "ſeventy-ſecond repreſentation of this bad play."

† VOLTAIRE conſidered *Œdipe* as his *chef d'œuvre* in point of poetry. "Take care," ſaid DE LA MOTTE, one day, "that I "don't put your *Œdipe* into proſe." "If you do," ſaid VOLTAIRE, "I'll put your *Ines* into verſe." This anecdote has given riſe to an idea that *Ines* was written in proſe.

verſe againſt his own opinion, had but little ſucceſs for that very reaſon; and, when he turned it into proſe, it did not ſucceed at all. This induced him to defend his conduct; which it muſt be confeſſed he did very ably, for, indeed, he was upon good ground. VOLTAIRE replied to him; and, as he had a real regard for DE LA MOTTE, uſed in his arguments every poſſible politeneſs and delicacy. DE LA MOTTE, under the pleaſanteſt irony, couched his arguments in the ſame terms, and this called forth innumerable ſquibs levelled at theſe polite enemies. Madame DACIER mixed in the diſpute; but, diſdaining VOLTAIRE's, or any body's politeneſs, this female ARISTOPHANES reprobated in unqualified terms every requiſite of the drama but its barbarity, which one ſhould naturally ſuppoſe is not a requiſite. It finiſhed by DE LA MOTTE's leaving the theatre.

DE LA MOTTE wrote for the French theatre two comedies, and five for the Italian theatre. The ſubjects are principally taken from the Tales of DE LA FONTAINE, or rather from thoſe whence they were taken by him. They are moſt of them performances of merit, for, indeed, it was impoſſible for DE LA MOTTE to write ill, but they are certainly the moſt inferior of his works. His operas, twelve in number, are clearly upon the whole

the beſt of his dramatic writings; for, though as to the general requiſites of opera writing, QUINAULT ſtood certainly before all other French poets, though far behind METASASIO, yet, for the true, grand, extended idea of lyric writing, DE LA MOTTE was infinitely ſuperior to them both, of which his incomparable odes are an incontrovertible proof. DE LA MOTTE's operas were compoſed by various muſicians, among whom were CAMPRA, DESTOUCHES, MARAIS, COLASSE, and LA BARRE.

DE LA MOTTE was loved and eſteemed both in public and in private the whole of his life. His genius was brilliant, his underſtanding commanding, and his manners amiable, to which his writings bear ample teſtimony. They are the effuſions of a great mind regulated by a ſound judgment. Alike a ſtranger to rancour or adulation, not a ſingle line of ſatyric ſeverity has eſcaped from his pen, nor has he, though his heart teemed with philanthropy, and though it was his delight to praiſe, in one ſingle inſtance condeſcended to flatter*.

* It muſt not be objected that his odes, which are avowedly panegyric, are flattery. Great men and celebrated actions require from the poet ſtrong and enthuſiaſtic language. The moſt luxuriant flights of fancy may be permitted, and the moſt flowery fields of imagination traverſed, in ſearch of ſuitable wreaths for the brows of

Destouches demands our next attention, on whom it will be the less necessary to enlarge, because almost the whole of his productions have been in one form or another exhibited on the English theatre, and will, therefore, of course require an investigation in their place. He was born at Tours, in 1680, and bred up to arms, in which profession he so distinguished himself that he grew into great esteem with his superiors.

In 1717, the Duc D'Orleans, then Regent of France, sent him on an embassy to England, where he was employed on negociations for three years, and where, no doubt, he greatly improved himself as a dramatic writer, his comedies, though heavy, and sometimes insufferably tiresome, being constructed more upon the English plan than any thing French which had gone before them. *Le Tambour Nocturne* in particular, is almost a literal translation of the *Drummer*.

His works, which are published in ten volumes, consist of twenty-two comedies, and some divertisements and detatched scenes. His first piece, *Le Curieux Impertinent*, appeared in 1710, which was

---

heroes, philosophers, and legislators. De la Motte in this has followed Pindar, and I know not in some instances that he has not equalled him.

followed, before he came to ENGLAND, by *L'Ingrat*, *L'Irreſolû*, *Le Mediſant*, *Le Triple Mariage*, and *L'Obſtacle Imprevû*. The firſt piece he produced after his return to FRANCE, was *Le Philoſophe Marie* *, this was ſucceeded by *L'Envieux*, and *Les Philoſophes Amoureux*, which are all that appeared of this author till 1730.

What DESTOUCHES ought principally to be commended for is his endeavouring to give the French ſtage a conſequence that it had before been a ſtranger to; but, in cutting up frivolity, he has loſt ſight of humour. His principal character is always a coloſſal ſtatue, by the ſide of which the ſubordinate perſonages ſtand like mere pigmies, and are totally loſt in our contemplation of the grandeur and ſtupidity of the primary object; which after all would no more attract our attention than any other monſtrous figure, did not ſome accommodating LYSIMON, or GERONTE, like a wild beaſt-man, play off its ſingularities and explain its extraordinary qualities.

* DESTOUCHES when he was in ENGLAND married a young lady of a catholic family; but, as he was in a public capacity, he conceived it proper to keep this marriage a ſecret. This ſecret, coming out by degrees in his family, ſome of whom were offended, the uncle in particular, who wanted to propoſe to him another wife, makes up the circumſtances of the comedy, all the characters of which are drawn from life. It is by much the beſt of his plays.

It muſt not, however, be denied that in DESTOUCHES there are many beauties; in his intrigue he is happier than MOLIERE, and in his moral more chaſte than REGNARD, for between theſe two he ſeems ambitious to place himſelf. He is, however, too dry, too ſententious; and, if the obſervation may be permitted, too wiſe, and too regular. He is generally without faillies, or embelliſhments; which, when rigouroûſly judged, are ſometimes frivolous and miſplaced; yet, when judiciouſly introduced, they enliven the mind and warm it to a more willing acknowledgement of the pleaſure of truth.

MARIVAUX, whoſe writings claim the higheſt praiſe for their ingenious, bold, and meritorious tendency, ſtarted like a true genius with a determination to become original. He went, however, in ſome reſpects upon a falſe principal. Having moſt uncommon powers of language, and fancying his predeceſſors had exhauſted all that it was poſſible to do with character, he reſolved to turn entirely to ſubjects of intrigue; which, in proportion as they admit of variety to infinity, loſe known and acknowledged manners, and, therefore, wander out of of nature's ſight.

'Tis too much to attempt to analyze the heart.

Pleaſant traits, pretty thoughts, new ſituations, agreeable repartees, and lively ſailies, are all thrown away when they are uſed to betray motives, inſtead of develop actions. MARIVAUX goes for the applauſe of the mind inſtead of the heart; the province of comedy is to command the applauſe of both. Full of genius, he expoſes nothing but ingenuity; certainly fraught with fineſſe, with delicacy, with grace, and with ſentiment; but, nevertheleſs, frequently tireſome, and often almoſt inexplicable. The French are remarkable for ſaying a great deal without intereſt, upon nothing; MARIVAUX has the knack of making the nothing, on which he ſays a great deal, intereſting.

MARIVAUX brought out on the French and Italian theatres thirty-ſix pieces, generally in three acts and in proſe; thirteen of which were performed before 1730. They ſeldom had ſucceſs at ſtarting, and it was his uſual obſervation that he conſidered it more flattering to his reputation that they ſhould pleaſe on repetition than at firſt. Many of them, however, never recovered the blow, and it is probably owing to the extraordinary, the inconceivable ingenuity they contain, that any of them kept the ſtage for a length of time. I ſhall ſay more on this ſubject when I ſhew that ſome of the Engliſh poets have read MARIVAUX as well as DESTOUCHES.

Circumſcribed as I am I muſt now take up authors in a much more ſummary way than either their merits or my wiſhes incline me. Le Sage, Fuzelier, and D'Orneval, who ran the ſame career, may properly be mentioned in this place. Le Sage, claiming every way the pre-eminence, and being ſo well known in England by Gil Blas, and Le Diable Boiteux, it will be more unneceſſary that I ſhould enlarge on his genius and writings.

Le Sage wrote ten pieces for the French and Italian theatres, and twenty for the fairs, beſides thoſe he had a hand in together with Fuzelier and D'Orneval. They all go for a fair and lively expoſition of folly, and many of thoſe performed at the fairs are either parodies of celebrated plays at that time performed at the regular theatres, or neat ſatires on temporary ſubjects. His pieces for the theatre are too much in the Spaniſh ſtyle, except two or three, which are admirably levelled at the reigning abſurdities of thoſe times, of theſe *La Tontine*, and *Turcaret*, are the moſt remarkable.

Fuzelier wrote at different times for all the theatres, and brought out twenty pieces ſingle handed, and as many in conjunction with Le Sage and D'Orneval; which laſt, though he greatly

aſſiſted thoſe aſſociates, is not reported to have written any thing without them.

It will be proper to mention DOMINIQUE, ROMAGNESI, the two RICCOBONIS and LE GRAND together; for as they wrote reſpectively, or in conjunction, for the Italian theatres, from ſubjects either taken from Italian canvaſſes, or approved by them all, it would be difficult to diſtinguiſh their ſeparate merits. There are nearly a hundred pieces to be traced in which all theſe had a hand.

PANNARD, PIRON, CAROLET, and others, alſo contributed at this period towards the prodigious fund of amuſement which attracted the attention of the public at the Italian theatre and the fairs, while BOISSI, LA FONT, BOINDIN, LA CHAUSSEE, BEAUCHAMPS, DE LA RUE*, and others, did their beſt to make a ſtand at the French theatre againſt VOLTAIRE, DE LA MOTTE, and

* DE LA RUE, who was DANCOURT's preceptor, and who brought out two plays, had, as we have ſeen, an averſion to the theatre. It was this that induced him to reprove DANCOURT for his impiety in being an actor. "Ah father," ſaid DANCOURT, "I am afraid the only difference between us is that I am actor "to the king and you are actor to the pope."

Destouches; but, as I have done with none of thoſe mentioned in this chapter, except De la Motte, whoſe manners, and whoſe merits were an honour to his country, I ſhall, as I go on, reſume ſuch points concerning them as I may conceive likely to inſtruct or amuſe the reader.

CHAP. VIII.

CONTINUATION OF THE FRENCH THEATRE TO 1745.

As the works of VOLTAIRE now form the principal feature of the French drama, I cannot do better than, through the medium of enumerating thoſe, give every collateral particular relative to the other authors his cotemporaries; for to ſpeak particularly, limitted as I am, of every author and play that my documents furniſh me with, would be little more than to ſet down names and dates.

Eryphile produced by VOLTAIRE, in 1732, had no ſucceſs*. It was, therefore, withdrawn and

* L'ABBE DESFONTAINES, an indifferent author, but a troubleſome critic, predicted this, and was, therefore, treated by VOLTAIRE in the groſſeſt manner; who, among other things, did not ſpare to call him an aſs, and an ideot; but, when the public voice verified his prediction, VOLTAIRE, who with the greateſt pretended indifference was the foreſt of all authors, witneſs his letter to the Queen on the ſubject of this play when it was parodied under the title of *Semiramis*, was guilty of a thouſand meanneſſes to conciliate the favour of the Abbe, which he at lenth effected.

brought forward as we ſhall ſee under the title of *Semiramis*. The changes neceſſary for the occaſion were not very difficult, for the two ſubjects are perfectly the ſame. His next piece was *Zaire*, a tragedy performed in 1732, of which I regret I have not room to ſpeak the eulogium, but a proper opportunity will occur when this performance under the title of *Zara* ſhall be ſpoken of as one of the ornaments of the Engliſh theatre *. This piece, in addition to the popularity it atchieved for itſelf, brought forward the famous DUFRESNE, and the celebrated Mademoiſelle GAUSSIN, who performed the parts of *Oraſmane* and *Zaire*.

Adelaide du Gueſclin, brought out in 1734, was the next production of this author. It had been performed before under the title of *Adelaide;* and, having had but mediocre ſucceſs on either of theſe occaſions, it was, as we ſhall ſee, afterwards pro-

* When *Zaire* firſt appeared, a moſt invidious and contemptible report prevailed, that VOLTAIRE had purchaſed it for two hundred piſtoles of a certain Abbe MACARTY, an Iriſhman, who was firſt a Roman Catholic and afterwards turned Turk. Nay, even a certain notary was ſaid to have drawn up an obligation for the ſum. I confeſs, when I firſt heard of this circumſtance, knowing the imbecility and irreſolution of VOLTAIRE's mind, I dreaded he would have betrayed ſomething like apprehenſion, but was charmed to find that, ſtanding fairly up againſt the infamous calumny, he treated it with the ſovereign and ineffable diſdain it merited.

duced under the title of the *Duc de Foix* *. *Alzire* appeared in 1736. The ſame engines were ſet to work to decry this piece as had been uſed to injure *Zaire*. The real author was ſaid to have been a man of the name of LE FRANC. VOLTAIRE, in reply to this calumny, ſaid that ſome perſon inſtructed as to the ſubject of his piece might have ſuggeſted it to Monſ. LE FRANC, in which caſe he was welcome to treat it; and, if it proved better than that which he had ſubmitted to the public, he ſhould be happy to forget the unkindneſs in proportion as he ſhould be obliged to applaud the merit of the piece. "I ſhall always adopt this conduct," added he, "for I don't like paper wars. †"

L'Infant Prodigue appeared the ſame year with ſucceſs. It was written in verſe. It is ſaid that if VOLTAIRE had not been afraid of the journaliſts he would have ſtruck into proſe. It would have been a noble advantage if he had, for there can be

---

* One of the characters was called *Coucy*, to whom another addreſſed himſelf thus: "Et tu content, Coucy?" A man in the *parterre* inſtantly cried out, "couſſi, couſſi," a provincial admiſſion of the Italian coſi, coſi, which ſignifies ſo, ſo, an expreſſion particularly well adapted, becauſe, on the Italian theatre by way of burleſque, it was often uſed by Harlequin.

† A man of genius, being told that VOLTAIRE was not the author of *Alzire*, "I ſhould be heartily glad if it were ſo," ſaid he, "for "in that caſe the nation would boaſt of one more great poet than it "had bargained for."

no doubt but VOLTAIRE's profe is the beſt in the French language, and he would, in that caſe, have completed DE LA MOTTE's laudable plan.

Zulime was brought out in 1740. We are told that this piece was conſiderably altered after it was out of VOLTAIRE's hands, and to this circumſtance is aſcribed its having had but little ſucceſs. *La Mort de Cæzar*, a tragedy in three acts, was brought forward in 1743. The characters are entirely men, conſequently the plot, having nothing to do with love, is rude and revolting. Its ſucceſs was in proportion.

Mahomet was performed for the firſt time in 1742. This idol of the French was withdrawn after the third repreſentation by authority, and the author informed that he would be denounced if he ſuffered it to be performed again. VOLTAIRE, however, having employed all his credit, Cardinal de FLEURY iſſued a new order for its appearance; nevertheleſs the actors were afraid of incenſing the Procureur General, and it was kept back till 1751, when it came forward with moſt extravagant ſucceſs, and has always been conſidered by the French as the beſt written play in all the works of VOLTAIRE*.

* VOLTAIRE aſked FONTENELLE one day, who was then upwards of ninety, what he thought of *Mahomet*? "Il eſt horriblement beau," ſaid FONTENELLE.

Merope came out in 1743. This ſubject had been treated by GILBERT in 1643, by CHAPELLE, again by LA GRANGE CHANCEL, and at different periods by other poets under various titles, VOLTAIRE's play is beyond all queſtion the beſt, and its reception was equal to its merit.

The pieces of DESTOUCHES, after 1730, are *Le Glorieux*, *La Fauſſe Agnes*, *Le Tambour Nocturne*, *Le Diſſipateur*, *L'Ambitieux et L'Indiſcrette*, *La Belle Orgueilleuſe*, *L'Amour Uſé*, *Les Amours de Ragonde*, *L'Homme Singulier*, *La Force du Naturel*, *Le Jeune Homme a L'Epreuve*, and two or three others. Of all theſe the ſucceſs was ſo uniform, except in one or two inſtances, that it will be unneceſſary to ſay more here than that DESTOUCHES was deſervedly conſidered as a very reputable author.

DESTOUCHES generally lived in retirement on an eſtate purchaſed near MELUN. His cuſtom was when he had finiſhed a piece to take it to PARIS, and after it had been repreſented for the firſt time, to return again into the country. He died much beloved and reſpected at the age of ſeventy-four.

The remainder of the pieces brought out by MARIVAUX, need not be particularized. They conſiſt of twenty-two comedies and one tragedy,

which was called *Annibal*, many of which ſucceeded with perſons of taſte and diſcernment, but were generally withdrawn after a time to form the delight of the cloſet, where they are beyond meaſure charming. MARIVAUX lived eſteemed, and died regretted at the age of ſeventy five.

DE LA MOTTE, DESTOUCHES, and MARIVAUX, were members of the French academy. DE LA MOTTE ſucceeded T. CORNEILLE, DESTOUCHES was choſen in the place of CAMPISTRON, and MARIVAUX was elected at the death of the Abbe de HOUTEVILLE *.

* The preliminary diſcourſe of DE LA MOTTE was anſwered by Monſieur de COLLIERES, director of the academy. After congratulating him on his filling the ſituation formerly occupied by the great CORNEILLE, and ſince devolved to his brother, who had by his dictionary and other works of utility proved himſelf worthy him who had been the admiration of the age in which he had lived, Monſieur de COLLIERES, in the livelieſt terms, aſſured DE LA MOTTE that his works ſpoke their own eulogium, and that it was not more by the ſuffrages of the academy than by the general wiſh of the nation, that he was called to hold the honourable ſituation the world were ſo well convinced he would adorn.

DESTOUCHES was replied to by FONTENELLE, who delivered a moſt maſterly and eloquent harrangue, certainly the eulogium of the King and the Cardinal de POLIGNAC, rather than DESTOUCHES. It was, however, wound up very powerfully, and the academy were congratulated on receiving, in their new member, a ſubſtitute in comedy for what CAMPISTRON had been in tragedy.

MARIVAUX was addreſſed by the Archbiſhop of SENS, who

St. Foix, a moſt accompliſhed and elegant writer, unfortunately for the cauſe of literature dealt in nothing but trifles; trifles, however, only in ſize, for, in value, they were ineſtimable. St. Foix was too independent both in mind and circumſtances to drudge regularly for the theatre, otherwiſe there cannot be a doubt but he would have brought comedy in France to the trueſt perfection. Full of novelty, yet full of nature, with a correct knowledge of every dramatic requiſite, and a moſt penetrating judgement to give thoſe requiſites effect, his dialogue, nobly ſimple, agreeably playful, and deliciouſly intereſting, the whole domain of Thalia ſeemed open to his view, in which he was permitted to range for fancy, and variety.

He had the peculiar and maſterly merit in all his dialogue of concealing the writer. His characters uttered thoſe ſentiments with which nature

---

moſt delicately and adroitly excuſed himſelf for having been enticed out of the regular path of literature, in which it had been his cuſtom and his duty to walk, by the faſcinating inducements thrown out by the writings of the new academician. He recapitulated the beauties in his works, warned him againſt painting love too voluptuouſly, and finiſhed by giving him that tribute of praiſe which warm and ſincere as it was, he ſaid, "was but the echo of the multitude."

inſpired them, and uttered them in nature's language; St. Foix had nothing to do with it. Every thing ſeemed extemporaneous, becauſe it was full of the heart, and what immediately aroſe from honeſt truth, and conſcious reflection. Theſe and many other requiſites St. Foix moſt eminently poſſeſſed; which, if they are ſo evident in the ſpecimen he has given, written for amuſement at his hours of leiſure, his productions muſt have been valuable indeed had he devoted his whole time to them; and this is particularly confirmed by the fertility of his invention, and the ſtrength of his diſcernment; for, in twenty-two pieces he gave to the French and Italian theatres, though every plot is peculiarily original and greatly intereſting, no two plots have in any reſpect the ſmalleſt reſemblance of each other.

The pieces of St. Foix, before 1745, were *Deucalion et Pyrrha*, *Pandore*, *L'Oracle*, *L'Iſle Sauvage*, and *Les Graces*, and now I ſhall leave the works of Favart, Anseaume, Marmontel, Sedaine, and many other celebrated writers, whoſe productions about this period firſt made their appearance, together with all that remains to be ſaid of thoſe whom I have not yet done with, to give a brief account of the opera, ſuch particulars of the Italian theatre as may conduce to round my general hiſtory of it, to ſpeak of actors, of dancers, of

muſicians, and of farce writers; after which I ſhall regularly wind up my hiſtory of the French ſtage with a further account of their beſt writers, and ſuch neceſſary remarks on them and their merits as may ſerve hereafter for a comparative elucidation of the dramatic art in ENGLAND.

CHAP. IX.

THE OPERA.

HAVING brought the opera forward to the death of LULLY and the seceſſion of QUINAULT, I ſhall as briefly as poſſible give ſuch further particulars concerning it as may ſerve to aſſiſt my future account of it when I come to ſpeak of its eſtabliſhment in ENGLAND. Brief, indeed, I muſt be; for, beſides thoſe operas already mentioned, I reckon more than two hundred, good and bad, that were brought out from their eſtabliſhment up to the year 1773.

In theſe operas authors of all deſcriptions had a hand, from T. CORNEILLE, DE LA MOTTE, MARMONTEL, ROI, DANCHET, and even VOLTAIRE, to LE ABBE PELLEGRIN, BERNARD, MONDORGE, BRUERE, and CAHUSAC, down to many others of much more inconſiderable talents. Some of the muſicians I have already named; to theſe may be added ROYER, MATHEAU, MOURET, MONTECLAIRE, and many others who were, at length, completely eclipſed by RAMEAU. It ſhould not, however, be forgotten that the celebrated PHI-

LIDORE, whoſe muſic was almoſt as famous as his chefs, compoſed an opera called *Ernelinde* written by POINSINET.

RAMEAU, who was born in 1683, was induced by his paſſion for muſic, and his thirſt after improvement to viſit ITALY very early in life *. There he had formed his taſte upon PERGOLESE, JOMELLI, GALLUPPI, CORELLI, and all that ſtring of celebrated compoſers who exactly at that time had brought muſic to the higheſt degree of perfection. It muſt be underſtood, however, that it was not by their inſtruction, but merely by liſtening to their admirable compoſitions, that he became ſo aſtoniſhing a muſician. Never did he receive from any man a ſingle leſſon on harmony. Nature and his own ſtrong mind were his preceptors; and ſo well was he taught by ſuch infallible inſtructors that he at length became a harmonic legiſlator; a muſical LYCURGUS; to the juſtice of whoſe laws the whole tribe of compoſers have implicitly bowed obedience.

The French were ſo enthuſiaſtically attached to

* It is not my intention to ſpeak of muſic at length till I treat of its progreſs in ENGLAND. I ſhall then ſhow how it took root and grew in every country, and that it always arrived to the trueſt perfection whenever it was tranſplanted from the garden of ITALY.

that dull monotonous ſtyle of muſic introduced by LULLY, that it was with the utmoſt difficulty RAMEAU could prevail upon even the moſt indifferent writers to ſupply him with words, and he was fifty-five years of age when he promiſed the Abbe PELLEGRIN, a poor reſource by the by, a large ſum of money to write *Hypolite et Aricie*, which was performed in 1733. It was at firſt damned, but being again brought forward at the inſtance of ſome perſons of diſcernment, it ſo opened the eyes, or rather the ears of the nation, that a new character was from that hour given to the muſical taſte of the French.

After this, authors were ſolicitous enough to write for RAMEAU. MONDORGE, BRUERE, CAHUSAC, and AUTREAU, were all employed by him. At length VOLTAILE, who has told us he went out of his way to oblige a man of ſuch talents, wrote for him *Le Temple de la Gloire*, which was followed by

* This ſecond repreſentation was in a great meaſure owing to the noble conduct of PELLEGRIN, the author, and CAMPRA, RAMEAU's profeſſional rival. PELLEGRIN, ſtruck with the effect of the muſic, tore the inſtrument to pieces which RAMEAU had given him as a ſecurity for his money, ſaying he pitied the taſte of the French, and that he was but too happy to fall in ſuch company; and CAMPRA being aſked what he thought of the muſic, ſaid there was good muſic enough in *Hypolite* to ſerve for ten operas. This was told to the Prince de CONTI, who aſked if theſe were really his ſentiments? He anſwered, that the declaration was no more than truth

Pygmalion, written by De la Motte, and compoſed by La Barre in 1700. but reſet by Rameau in 1746. After this he had the good fortune to be aſſiſted by the pen of Marmontel, who wrote for him four pieces, by which time the French opera had ariſen to its higheſt degree of perfection.

After all, the opera in France, admirable as the talents of Rameau were, never equalled, or even approached the Italian opera. The vaſt theatres of Venice, Milan, and other places gave a ſtyle and a magnificence to the ſcenery greatly beyond the ſcenery of the French. The advantage of

---

and juſtice, for that Rameau was certainly born to eclipſe their whole tribe. This prediction was completely verified, for no other muſician had brilliant ſucceſs after this event. The conſequence was that thoſe who happened to poſſeſs good ſenſe and honeſty like Campra, gave way without murmuring; but the reſt, among whom were Monteclaire, and Mouret, became a prey to envy and deſpair. Monteclaire attacked Rameau on his violating the rules of harmony; but, happening, by way of ſhewing his candour, to praiſe the only paſſage in the opera of *Les Indes Galantes* written by Fuzelier, in which the rules of harmony were actually violated, he was ſo completely laughed at that he never ventured afterwards to ſpeak of Rameau or his muſic. As for poor Mouret, it is a literal fact that he went mad and employed himſelf during his higheſt paroxyſms in ſinging a chorus in the ſecond act of *Caſtor et Pollux*, written by Bernard, and compoſed by Rameau, beginning with theſe words:

Qu'au feu du tonnerre,
Le feu des enfers
Declare la Guerre.

ſetting Italian words to Italian muſic, ſuch muſic eſpecially as was produced by the joint labours of ſo many wonderful compoſers, again threw the French opera at an immenſe diſtance. In ſhort in nothing but the dances, by the way a mere apendage to the opera, have the French excelled, but in theſe they have ever excelled all EUROPE *.

The performances at PARIS derived great reſpectability from their regulations by the order of the king. After the death of LULLY, who had at leaſt the merit of being a ſtrict diſciplinarian, the opera relaxed greatly from the regularity and good order that had been before kept up. This induced the king, in 1713, to iſſue an arret conſiſting of eighteen articles, which enacted that the director of the Royal Muſical Academy ſhould chuſe the beſt poſſible performers both vocal and inſtrumental, and alſo performers for the ballets; no one, however to be received without the approbation of the inſpector general. That a ſchool for muſic and dancing ſhould be eſtabliſhed where all performers ſhould be taught gratis.

---

* A celebrated Engliſh dancer called on the famous MARCEL at PARIS, who deſired to have a ſpecimen of his abilities. The Engliſhman could not pleaſe MARCEL. Every thing was tried and all to no purpoſe. At laſt, "*tenez mon ami*," ſaid he, "*en voila aſſez*;" "the fact is, you jump very well in LONDON, but as to dancing, my good friend, it is only to be found in PARIS."

That the different merits of the performers being aſcertained and by them acknowledged, they ſhould receive ſuch parts as were provided for them without murmuring, upon pain of being deprived of a month's pay for the firſt omiſſion, and of being diſcharged for the ſecond. Their duty both towards one another, and towards the public, is next very properly pointed out, the portion of the profits equitably appropriated, a fund eſtabliſhed for ſuch as may have performed fifteen years, not as a charity but as a reward for paſt ſervices, and another fund, by way of encouraging emulation, to be at ſtated periods divided among all thoſe who may have beſt diſcharged their duty towards their employers and the public.

It is next ordered that, during all receſſes, the performers, without diſtinction, ſhall be put upon half pay; afterwards that the authors and compoſers of all operas ſhall be paid in proportion to their ſucceſs on every night as far as thirty repreſentations, provided the opera is performed ſo many nights in ſucceſſion. The examination of all operas to be impartial, and no meaſure, either for or againſt authors, muſicians, or performers, of any deſcription, to be taken without a memorial drawn up and well atteſted for the peruſal of the inſpector general, who ſhall audit all accounts and regulate, in conformity to the will of the king, all matters reſpecting the management of

the opera; the accounts of all denominations to be conſtantly ſettled the laſt day of every month.

Perſons were, in conſequence of this new regulation, immediately appointed, and it was, without variation, ever afterwards kept up. In 1773, the appointments ſtood thus: REBEL at the head of the muſical academy, FERRET and PARANT principal conductors of the ſinging ſchool, the two GARDELS regulators of the dancing ſchool; among the principal male ſingers were GELIN, LARRIVEE, DURAND, LE GROS, MUGUET, TIROT, and LAINEZ; the principal female ſingers were LARRIVEE, ARNOULD, DUPLANT, BEAUMESNIL, ROSALIE, DURANC, I CHATEAUNEUF, and GIRARDIN, and there were about thirty others employed in choruſes and other inferior ſtations.

VESTRIS was the ballet maſter, who was alſo principal dancer with GARDEL and DUBERVAL. Next came a train of figurants; then the principal women, who were PESLIN, GUIMARD, HEINEL, and ASSELIN, and then the figurantes and ſupernumeraries amounting to about fifty. The liſt was cloſed by the names of thoſe who performed in the orcheſtra to the number of ſixty-four, ſo that the whole company, including all deſcriptions of perſons employed, muſt have conſiſted of at leaſt two hundred.

CHAP. X.

ITALIAN THEATRE.

I SHALL now look after such authors and other persons as were concerned in the Italian theatre, and interested in that conduct, and those circumstances which grew out of it after its establishment in 1716.

It has been seen that the actors at the fairs, having the advantage of performing entirely in French, became very formidable rivals of the Italians, who were, in conjunction with the French comedians, continually making interest to throw every possible rub in their way. The public, however, tired of seeing them thus persecuted, took the matter up; and, after it had gone through a number of hands, some of whom had been ruined in the contest, FRANCISQUE and LALAUZE, were glad to sell the concern to PONTEAU, who wrote a number of things in conjunction with FUZELIER, PANNARD, CAROLET, GALLET, and L'AFFICHARD, and he had influence enough to obtain from the musical aca-

demy permiſſion to call his performance *L'Opera Comique.*

From this time forward theſe whimſical pieces grew more and more into repute, A hiſtory, or an anecdote deſcribing any of their former perſecutions, a parody of a bad tragedy, in ſhort any temporary whim, dramatized by LE SAGE and his followers, who all wrote with wonderful pleaſantry, was a thouſand times more welcome to the public than thoſe pieces, half French and half Italian, ſung through the noſe, or thoſe, entirely French, ſpoken through the noſe, at the regular theatres, The conſequence was they became too formidable; and, in 1742. were ſuppreſſed, with this qualification, however, that the performers ſhould be incorporated with the Italians.

The inferior deſcription of performers, nevertheleſs, ſuch as had been interlocutors at the puppet ſhews, or rope-dancers, or tumblers, or, in ſhort, any of thoſe for whom it was impoſſible to find any employment in a regular theatre, ſtill hovered about the fairs, and were permitted, or rather ſuffered to perform there, and on the *Boulevards*, ſuch drolls and farces as were within their capacity, with a view to aſſiſt and relieve thoſe tricks and feats they exerciſed as their proper profeſſion.

Among these, the famous NICOLET, so well known upon the *Boulevards*, cut the most conspicious figure. This man fairly took up the ancient farces, of which I shall not have a better opportunity to give an account than this. They were certainly the origin of that prodigious number of proverbs, and pieces in one act, which have spread themselves through FRANCE, either in private societies, or on the stage. They were without doubt originally the productions of the *Children of Sans Souci*, and at that time they contained, probably, either the burlesque of the Greek satires, or the asperity of the Roman, or, perhaps, a mixture of both; but, being neglected by them for works of greater magnitude when they joined the Confraternity of the Passion, these farces were suspended, and would have been altogether lost if some of the buffoons had not afterwards restored them; who, not being sufficiently informed to imitate Greeks and Romans, made a shift to invent a great deal of drollery by ridiculing the folly of their own countrymen.

Of these PATHELIN, TABARIN, GUILLOT GORJU, GAUTIER GARGUILLE, GROS GUILLAUME, and TURLUPIN, were the principal. The last three were journeymen bakers, and friends from their infancy. It is difficult to ascertain whether these farces, which they performed upon their own

account, were exhibited during any receſs, or whether they left the company to which they belonged, but it is certain they were in the early part of their lives, all actors in HARDY's plays, and the other exhibitions of that time.

For the purpoſe of performing theſe farces they took a ſmall tennis court, near *le porte St. Jaques*, which they converted into a theatre. The price of admittance was two ſous and ſix deniers. They had ſuch ſucceſs that the company of the *Hotel de Bourgogne* complained of them to Cardinal RICHELIEU; who, being fond of every thing dramatic, ſent for them to perform before him in the *Palais Royal*, which was then called his palace. They ſatisfied the Cardinal ſo well that he would not forbid their performance*. This ſo emboldened them that they

* The ſubject of the farce they were ſaid to have performed before the Cardinal was as follows: GROS GUILLAUME, who is repreſented to have been as thick as he was long, and who often, by means of a dreſs with hoops ſtretched acroſs, formed himſelf into the figure of a hogſhead, was in this farce ſuppoſed to be the wife of TURLUPIN; who, jealous of GARGUILLE, is determined to cut her head off. He ſeizes her by the hair with a drawn ſabre in his hand, while, ſhe upon her knees conjures him by every thing dear to him to abate his anger. She reminds him of their paſt loves, how ſhe rubbed his back when he had the rheumatiſm, and how charmed ſhe had always been when he wore his flannel night cap, but all in vain. Will nothing move thee? cries this amiable female in the laſt deſpair. Oh cruel! Think on the bacon and cabbage I fryed for

grew more and more ſcurilous and perſonal; till GROS GUILLAUME, in one of their farces, counterfeited a certain magiſtrate ſo perfectly that he iſſued a warrant to take them all up. GROS GUILLIAUME was put in priſon, where he ſhortly afterwards died. His companions made their eſcape, but it is ſaid they had been ſuch ſworn brothers and friends all their lives, and had promiſed ſo faithfully to ſtick by each other, that when, GARGUILLE and TURLUPIN heard of their friend's death they fell ill and ſoon afterwards followed him. They were very old, the youngeſt of them being nearly eighty.

This ſketch may ſerve to ſhew whence the farces performed on the *Boulevards* originated, the humour and ſtyle of which MOLIERE, DANCOURT, and others had very frequently in view, and, indeed, all the writers for fairs. Theſe having ſelected all the valuable parts, nothing remained for the exhibitors on the *Boulevards* but groſſneſs and filth, which certainly they have ever thrown about pretty profuſely *.

---

you yeſterday. Oh the ſorcereſs! cries TURLUPIN. I can't reſiſt her. She knows how to take me by my foible. The bacon! the very fat's now riſing in my ſtomach. Live, fry cabbage, and be dutiful.

* The moſt indecent nonſenſe of our merry Andrews and puppet ſhew men may give ſome idea of it.

The names of Harlequin, Pantaloon, Scaramouche, and the reſt of the pantomime characters, are ſuppoſed to have been either the real or adventitious titles of thoſe who firſt performed them. The original Harlequin is ſaid to have been a young performer among the Italians at the time of HENRY the third; who being retained by the preſident HARLAY, was called by his companions, according to the Italian cuſtom of giving the maſter's name to the ſervant, Arlequino; a name that DOMINIQUE, GHERARDI, CARLIN, and others ever after went by. The names of Mezetin, Pantaloon, and ſeveral of the reſt are ſaid to have been real; and thus, whatever might be the ſubject, or whatever the ſcene, you ſaw the pieces always performed as it were, by one family. This bad cuſtom ſpread itſelf through all their comic writings, which we ſee ſtuffed with Damons, and Gerontes, and Lyſimons, and Eraſtes, out of number, inſtead of thoſe appropriate names by which we diſtinguiſh the variety of characters that are introduced in our comedies.

After the junction of the Italian theatre with the comic opera, they muſtered very powerfully. CAMILLE, an admirable Pantaloon, brought with him his daughter; a moſt accompliſhed and beautiful woman. "A large volume," ſays my author, "could not contain half the verſes that were written

" in her praiſe." She was an actreſs as well as a dancer, and admirable in both capacities. CLAIRVAL was an excellent ſinger and a ſound actor. CARLO VERONESE alſo brought out his daughter, CAROLINE, who performed the Colombine, that is to ſay, the chambermaid, for all the Harlequins at the Italian theatre were valets, and all the Colombines chambermaids; ſhe had almoſt as many verſes written in her praiſe as CAMILLE: Some of them by MARMONTEL, who was in love with her.

To Madame FAVART, whoſe merit in public, and whoſe character in private life cannot be ſpoken of too highly, I lament that it is not in my power to do the juſtice ſhe merited. She ſung charmingly, and performed with delicacy, truth, and ſentiment. She was a perfect muſician, and played admirably on the harp. All theſe qualifications her huſband availed himſelf of in the characters ſhe performed, which he wrote purpoſely for her, and to which ſhe gave ſo much grace and nature that her manner has been ever ſince the ſtandard of imitation. In her private life ſhe was a tender wife, and mother, and a faithful and affectionate friend.

THEVENARD and THEVENAU were two admirable ſingers. THOMASSIN was a good Harlequin, OCTAVE, who acted, danced, and played upon eight

inſtruments, was a great favourite, and STICOTTI was an excellent Pierrot; but the arrangement of the Italian theatre, in 1773, which I ſhall now bring forward, will ſhew the ſtate of the company, and how well it was regulated.

It is premiſed, ſay theſe laws, that the company are under the immediate protection of the king, and muſt render account to him of their conduct through the ſuperintendant of his *menus plaiſirs*, and the gentlemen of his chamber. The organ, through which all applications, reports, and appeals are to be conveyed, to be compoſed of three performers called *Semainiers*, or weekly inſpectors, choſen by a majority out of the company. Theſe inſpectors are to have different departments. The firſt is to take care of the regiſters, to examine the receipts, and diſburſements, and to act in every reſpect as guardian and treaſurer. He is to convoke all aſſemblies, and regulate with the conſent of a majority of the company, the buſineſs of the week; which, having been properly digeſted, is to be announced by the bills to the public, and without good cauſe to the contrary, literally carried into execution.

The ſecond inſpector is to examine the ſtate of the company, the ſtock liſt of performances, the merits of the performers, their forwardneſs as to the diſcharge of their duty; to ſee after the ſtate of the

decorations, to take care at performances and rehearſals, that every decorum is obſerved, and that nothing is neglected by actors, ſingers, dancers, painters, or members of any other deſcription, that may render their exertions worthy the patronage of the king, and the encouragement of the public.

The third inſpector is to watch over the conduct of the other two, to render an account of every thing that paſſes to the intendant *Des Menus*, and to inſtruct the company as to what orders he receives in conſequence from court, and whether the proceedings of the company are approved or diſapproved of by the king.

Theſe inſpectors are to remain in office three weeks, and, during that time, to ſerve reſpectively each office; the whole company, on every Saturday morning in full aſſembly, receiving an authentication of their fidelity in the diſcharge of their ſeveral truſts, and being at liberty to examine their conduct, on which they may paſs a vote of thanks or cenſure, each performer voting according to the order of his or her reception in the company; at which aſſembly the king's pleaſure is to be made known, and reſolutions taken as to their future plans and operations; at all times ſtrictly adhering to theſe regulations.

Diſtributing of parts, forfeits, recompences over

and above the common appointments, and firſt appearances are regulated as equitable as every thing elſe; but theſe, the duty of the performers, and other particulars, I ſhall reſerve till I lay them by the ſide of the Engliſh regulations. I cannot, however, paſs by the treatment of authors.

All authors, who think proper to ſend pieces to the theatre, are to direct them to the ſecond ſemainier, who is to report the inſtructions which thoſe authors ſhall think proper to ſend with their performances to the company. If the author wiſhes to be concealed, they are to obſerve inviolable ſecrecy. If it ſhould be the opinion of the company that the piece ought to be read. notice is given and the author invited, who may either read his piece himſelf or chuſe that performer from the company who he conceives will do it the greateſt juſtice. The company are forbid to applaud or condemn, and the author is requeſted, after the reading is over, to retire that the opinions of the actors may be given without reſtraint.

The debate then begins, and it is put to the vote whether the piece ſhall be received or not; with the determination the ſecond ſemainier acquaints the author; who, if he thinks proper, may inſiſt upon altering his piece and ſubmitting it to a ſecond reading, and, if then he ſhould remain diſſatisfied,

he may ultimately infift, through the third femainier, of appealing to the intendant of *Des Menus*.

The profits of the author are, for a firft piece, a ninth of the houfe during the whole of the firft run, which fhall not be interrupted upon any account till the receipt fhall twice together be under a thoufand livres. The profits, on pieces of two acts, are a eighteenth, and on pieces of one act, a twenty-fourth of the receipt, fubject to the fame regulations *.

In 1773, the principal performers where, men, CARLIN, ZENNUZZI, COLALTO, LA RUETTE, CLAIRVAL, CAILLOT, VERONESE, TRIAL, CAMERANI, and others; women, DESGLANDS, LA RUETTE, BERARD, BEAUPRE, TRIAL, ZANERINI, BILLIONI, COLOMBE, and others. Actors, retired on penfions from the king, DESBROSSES, THOMASSIN, TOUVOIS, GAILLARD, DEMERY, ROUSSEL, DESORMERY, MOREL, and LECLERC. Actreffes, BACELLI, GAULT, LEFEVRE, GAILLARD, and DU FAYEL. Ballet maftер DE HESSE. Principal dancers, men, BERQUELAURE, and HAMOIRE, women, LEFEVRE, and HAMOIRE, and fixteen figurants and figurantes. The orcheftra contained twenty-eight performers.

* When the pieces were mufical, the profits were ftill the fame but they were fhared between the author and compofer.

CHAP. XI.

AUTHORS, AND THE FRENCH THEATRE TO THE DEATH OF VOLTAIRE.

CREBILLON will now ſtand forward; who, in 1748, and at the age of ſeventy four, brought out *Catalina*, after labouring at it more than twenty years. It was greatly admired, and in particular the three firſt acts, notwithſtanding the turn VOLTAIRE had given to tragedy. There were, however, in it ſome incongruous things, and it would not probably have obtained that notice from the public it met with, had not Madame POMPADOUR taken it under her protection and preſented the actors with ſuperb dreſſes for all the characters.

Le Triumvirat came out in 1754, at which time CREBILLON was eighty. It had very reſpectable ſucceſs, and though his enemies, among whom may be reckoned his ſon, ſpoke of it as a plagiary from the reſt of his works, and among others from a tragedy called *Cromwel*, which had been fordidden to appear, it certainly did no diſcredit to his repu-

tation *. CREBILLON was received at the academy in 1731, and delivered his preliminary diſcourſe in verſe. He was very much reſpected through life. At his funeral attended all the public bodies and private individuals who were eſteemed for literary purſuits. Every mark of honour and reſpect was paid him, and the king at his private expence ordered for him a handſome monument.

Among the remaining authors, excluſive of thoſe already mentioned, who wrote for the ſtage during the life of VOLTAIRE, at the French theatre, we find FONTENELLE, BRET, MOISSY, PALISSOT, BELLOY, FAGAN, GRESSET, LA GARDE, MERCIER, DE MORAND, and a variety of others, and at the Italian theatre FAVART, ANSEAUME, SEDAINE, and many more.

FONTENELLE, whoſe arduous and meritorious

* Whenever the younger CREBILLON was in company he made a point of decrying his father's works, even to his face. "How now," ſaid a friend one day, "ſhall you who have been able to produce nothing "but fairy tales, and other frivolous rhapſodies, pretend to criticiſe "a man who has done honour to the age he lives in? who has written "ſo many tragedies and other works equally meritorious and inge-"nious." "Well," ſaid young CREBILLON, "and which are the "beſt of his productions?" "It would be difficult" ſaid the friend, "to aſcertain which is the beſt, but it is eaſy to ſee that you "are the worſt."

labours did so much service to the cause of literature in FRANCE, was the nephew of the great CORNEILLE. Among his dramatic pieces, which alone are entitled to notice here, and which were written like those of LA FONTAINE, rather for amusement than fame, are two or three of considerable merit. Not one, however, can be called perfect. There reigns every where in them a powerful and persuasive style, always ingenious, and often seducing, but there is an affectation of explaining self evident sentiments different from other authors; a weakness of expression that injures the strength of the sentence. 'Tis a painted giant, a Hercules dressed like a *petit maitre*; a fault, in short, that every judicious reader will see and ought to complain of, for unfortunately the faults of a great man are always dangerous, because they are always imitated; and, what is worse, are easily imitated by those who have not capacity to imitate his perfections.

I wish I could with equal propriety enlarge upon the other publications of FONTENELLE, which are replete with instruction and delight; and by which, through a long and laborious life, he deservedly kept a brilliant reputation. To his honour, however, and the perpetuity of his fame, the literary world are competent to speak his eulogium, and to enumerate all the particulars of those distinctions

which were heaped on him by the ſuffrages of the French Academy, the Academy des Belles Lettres, and the Academy of Pruſſia; of all which ſocieties he was a valuable member. He died at PARIS at the age of a hundred in 1757.

BOISSI wrote a great number of pieces for all the theatres; but they are negligently and ſlovenly written, and on mere chit chat ſubjects, therefore, though they ſerved well enough to expoſe and correct temporary folly, they have nothing in them from which may be expected a permanent reputation. His firſt pieces, after a time, were generally reduced to farces, and ſometimes to one act*; and, after the whim, or the abſurdity they were meant to laugh at, had gone by, they were heard of no more.

BRET produced ſeveral comedies for the French theatre, which are written with an elegant facility, natural, juſt, and give proof of no mean knowledge in the dramatic art. PALISSOT ſpeaks of this author in very handſome terms, and praiſes him in

* The actors took this liberty ſo mercileſsly with BOISSI, that he was not always very much ſatisfied, "Why zounds," ſaid he one day, "if my plays are to be hacked and hewed in this manner, "what ſhall I do to have a piece repreſented in five acts?" Write it in eleven, ſaid an actor.

particular for his pieces called *La Double Extravagance*, and *Le Faux Genereux*, in which there are certainly ſome admirable circumſtances. The firſt of which he ſays "is written in the true ſtyle of comedy, "and the other is full of great tenderneſs and real "intereſt."

Moissy, who produced eight or nine pieces, generally with ſucceſs, was an eaſy, elegant, and natural writer. His ſtyle is flowing and lively. He was accuſtomed to mix with the higheſt characters in real life, which enabled him to paint genteel manners with great truth of colouring, but as there is in genteel company generally too much vapidity, he often wants force, humour, and intereſt*.

Palissot was a writer of conſiderable eminence. He attempted a tragedy at nineteen which was received as a work of great promiſe. The ſituations were intereſting, and the ſtyle was natural, and pure; but when he conſidered the extreme difficulty of entering the liſts with Voltaire, he

---

About the time that Moissy brought out his comedy of *Les Deux Freres*, Bret produced another called *Les Deux Sœurs*. Neither of theſe plays had great ſucceſs. "What ſhall I do," ſaid Boissy to a friend, "with my two brothers?" "Why," ſaid the friend, "I think you can't do better than marry them to Bret's "two ſiſters."

very ſenſibly turned his hand to comedy, where he had a larger field to range, and where he might more freely exerciſe that pointed and ſatyric vein which beſt ſuited his genius.

Having made up his mind, he determined to become another ARISTOPHANES; and, that he might be the more conſpicuous, he went to the very fountain head for materials. His firſt comedy that became popular was called *Les Originaux*, and brought out at NANCY, in LORRAINE in 1755. In this play, without mincing the matter, he boldly drew the character of ROUSSEAU; not individually as to his perſon or his manners, but as his mind appeared in his writings. The adherents and diſciples of ROUSSEAU, who were numerous, particularly in that town, preſented a memorial to the king of POLAND, duke of LORRAINE and of BAR, in which they prayed vengeance on the head of the author. The ſtorm was violent, but it was ſhort. PALISSOT triumphed, and this oppoſition only ſerved to make him more popular, and encourage him to purſue a career for which his victory had ſhewn he was ſo qualified.

In 1760, PALISSOT brought out *Les Philoſophes*, which contained ſome moſt cutting and pointed ſatire at all thoſe who were advocates for the fanciful

and dangerous doctrines of ROUSSEAU, VOLTAIRE, and other authors of that ſtamp *. Its ſucceſs was beyond every thing that had been before repreſented on the French theatre. The actors, through the intereſt of VOLTAIRE and the reſt, were induced to raiſe a clamour againſt it, and Madmoiſelle CLAIRON, at the head of a party, entered a proteſt alledging that it ought not to be performed becauſe it contained perſonalities. The drift of this, however, being plainly ſeen upon an appeal, an order was iſſued for its repreſentation.

The accounts of the French authors ſay that all the works of CORNEILLE, RACINE, MOLIERE, CREBILLON, and VOLTAIRE put together, never attracted ſuch a concourſe of ſpectators, or ex-

---

* PALISSOT, in his Memoirs, ſays, that being honoured with the countenance and ſupport of two ladies of high rank, to whom he dedicated a work, finding thoſe ladies libelled becauſe they protected him, and ſeeing very plainly that it was the intention of the libellers to compromiſe the matter with the ladies by inducing them to transfer their favour, under an idea that his arguments ought not to be rated in oppoſition to theirs; he conceived it his duty to take the matter up. For this purpoſe, as the ſlanderers were public characters, indeed VOLTAIRE is ſuppoſed to have been concerned in it, he thought he could not more completely do public juſtice than by bringing them on the ſtage, and offering up their dark opinions and their invidious philoſophy, as a ſacrifice to truth, to reaſon, and to decorum.

cited ſo many cabals as this ſingle play *. It being clearly diſcovered, however, that the parties againſt it were intereſted perſons, or ſuborned at their inſtance, the favourers of the piece took up the quarrel as their own; and, after a long and warm altercation, its triumph was decided. It muſt, however, be confeſſed that it was a bold undertaking; for this piece did not attack merely a ſingle character, infamous, or ridiculous; but a ſect, numerous, powerful, and celebrated.

By ſome means or other, however, PALISSOT was ſilenced; for, though we hear of a comedy, called *L'Homme Dangereux*, into which he is ſaid to have thrown as much vigour and as much humour as into *Les Philoſophes*, and another, called *Les Courteſannes*, of a ſtill ſeverer caſt, nothing more of his worth notice was actually repreſented.

BELLOY, a very proper author to follow PALISSOT, gave like him one piece of uncommon

* VOLTAIRE wrote PALISSOT ſeveral letters upon this occaſion in which, through an affected gaiety, appeared the moſt poignant chagrin. A literary man ſaid upon this occaſion that VOLTAIRE would never forgive PALISSOT for throwing off his livery; by which it ſhould ſeem that PALISSOT enliſted under VOLTAIRE, and would have remained his diſciple had he not been ſo greatly incenſed, againſt him.

celebrity. It was called *Le Siege de Calais*, and its very extraordinary ſucceſs was entirely owing to its being the firſt French play purely hiſtorical. With very great art and management, he contrived to make not only the times which he portrayed reſemble the times in which he wrote, but the perſonages *. This tragedy had ſuch aſtoniſhing ſucceſs that the author was called for four times on the firſt night of its repreſentation, and once on every other during its run †. It was performed three times at court, the author was preſented in perſon to all the royal family, he dedicated his play to the king, who gave him a gold medal, ordered the controller general to pay him a conſiderable ſum, and exhorted him to continue writing upon French hiſtorical ſubjects.

Le Siege de Calais was performed in every town

---

* The Marſhal BRISSAC was aimed at in one of the principal characters of this piece, and he was very proud of the diſtinction. The part was performed by BRIZARD; and the Marſhal meeting him one evening cried out "BRIZARD, if you ſhould happen to be "ill let your comrades ſend to me to play your part."

† It is curious to remark that this rage was carried to a moſt ridiculous height. Whenever the author was called for, the whole theatre received him with ſhouts of applauſe, and never diſmiſſed him till they cried out with once voice, *Vive le Roy et Monſieur* DE BELLOY.

throughout FRANCE; the inhabitants of CALAIS preſented BELLOY with a gold box, and placed his portrait in the *Hotel de Ville;* the military voted him their thanks from the generals down to the ranks, and the celebrated Count D'ESTAING cauſed the play to be printed at St. DOMINGO, and diſtributed through all the French Weſt Indian Iſlands; and yet, after all, poſterity will know but little of BELLOY except this event. It was one of thoſe freaks in which the French fancied they were patriotic; for his *Zelmire*, ſtolen from METASTASIO and VOLTAIRE, and but little regarded, *Titus*, performed but once *, *Gaſton et Bayard*, which was received with reluctance by the actors, and indifference by the public, and *Pierre le Cruel*, which was performed at ROUEN becauſe they would not hear it out at PARIS, are but poor vouchers for the fame of BELLOY, eſpecially as the two laſt were produced after the *Siege of Calais*.

FAGAN, an author of conſiderable merit, but whoſe indolence would not ſuffer him to avail himſelf of the genius he poſſeſſed, produced for the French theatre, the Italian theatre, and the fairs,

* TITUS who is renowned for ſaying, whenever any day paſſed that he had not the happineſs of doing ſome benefit to mankind, "I "have loſt a day," has the very ſame expreſſion in this tragedy, on which a wag remarked when the piece was damned, "*Titus* "*perdit un Jour. Un Jour perdit Titus.*"

about twenty pieces. They are full of inequalities; they are a mixture of perplexed ingenuity; in ſhort they are lumps of ore containing gems which his idleneſs had not permitted him to ſeparate and poliſh. *Le Rendezvous* and *La Pupille* had the beſt ſucceſs.

Gresset wrote one tragedy and two comedies for the French theatre, which were performed with ſucceſs; but, being unwilling to engage in that warfare which generally attends writing for the ſtage, he is ſaid to have ſuppreſſed ſeveral others; as far as it went certainly a national loſs, for Gresset was a good writer. His poetry is natural and harmonious; fertile in images, rich in epithets, and never overcharged.

La Garde, who wrote three or four pieces with ſucceſs, was remarkable for being the firſt who regulated the mode of dreſſing on the ſtage, and eſtabliſhed what the French call *du coſtume*. He was originally intended for the church, and had even taken the habit. The enchanting voice of Madmoiſelle le Maure, however, enticed him away from the ſinging at high maſs to the ſinging at the opera. He was well calculated to give directions in the management of the theatre, and to ſuperintend decorations, to ſet off which, though he was no mean poet, his writings were generally intended.

MERCIER, an author of uncommon merit, and whoſe regard to the reputation of the ſtage was ſincere and patriotic, and ſupported with great judgment and good ſenſe, wrote twelve or fourteen pieces for the theatre; only two of which, however, were performed in PARIS. Theſe were called *Natalie*, and *La Brouette du Vinaigrier*. His other pieces were performed in almoſt every part of FRANCE. They are not comedies, but plays; a ſort of repreſentation as I have already contended nearer to nature than mere tragedies and comedies; containing circumſtances and ſentiments that go more immediately to the heart, becauſe they relate to the ſocial duties.

MERCIER, as well as DE LA MOTTE, was a great advocate for proſe, becauſe the mind ill accommodates itſelf to the pomp of verſe in tender and intereſting ſituations, and proſe is the language of nature. His ſtyle is uncommonly beautiful, ſtrong, decided, powerful; yet ſimple, unaffected, and eaſy. His loweſt characters utter noble, great, and philoſophic ſentiments without ſtepping beyond the truth of nature, or diſplaying more than what every heart can feel, and, therefore, what every tongue can expreſs.

MERCIER was certainly a wonderful writer*, and particularly for the ſtage. His knowledge of effect is perfect and critical, and he has no character, no incident, no ſituation that is not at once a part and an embelliſhment of the piece. His drift is at all times to inculcate the mild duties of benevolence, and to ſooth the mind to ſober and ſubſtantial happineſs rather than rouſe it to giddy and tranſient delight; but all ſuch authors are conſidered as reformers, and the ſtage is a dangerous ſpot to attempt at innovation. I ſhall have occaſion when I ſpeak of MOORE and LILLO to reſume this charming writer.

DE MORANDE, known more by his ſingularity than his writings, brought out ſix pieces of different deſcriptions, which might have ſucceeded tolerably had he not perpetually headed cabals, and ſet himſelf againſt the works of other authors, who, of courſe, revenged themſelves whenever any of his productions appeared. He was a ſtrange excentric character, and one of thoſe who are miſtakenly

---

* The reader muſt not confound this MERCIER with the author who wrote *Le Bonnet de Nuit*. They are brothers, and as I underſtand both valuable characters, but, a little like the two CORNEILLE's, very diſtinct from each other as writers.

called no men's enemy but their own, for perſons of this deſcription in general are peſts to ſociety. His pretenſions to dramatic fame are very ſlender, his pieces being generally an incoherent jumble, not, however, in ſome places without original merit.

MARMONTEL, whoſe admirable writings are of the moſt finiſhed kind, not only brought out ſeveral pieces himſelf, but furniſhed to other authors a variety of admirable ſubjects. His tragedies, though reſpectable, are by no means equal to his other plays*. *Venceſlas*, which, as we have ſeen, was only an alteration from ROTROU, ſeems to have determined MARMONTEL to ſtick to comic ſubjects †, for which

* In MARMONTEL's tragedy of *Cleopatra*, which was a good deal hiſſed, a famous mechanic had conſtructed an aſp ſo artfully that it ſeemed perfectly alive. As it approached CLEOPATRA the eyes ſparkled like fire and it began to hiſs. After the ſcene was over, one of the auditors aſked a perſon who ſat near him how he liked the piece; "Why faith, Sir," ſaid the other, "I am of the "ſame opinion of the aſp."

† The regard the public retained for an old author of eminence prevented their receiving this piece from the hands of MARMONTEL with the warmth that had been expected. To encourage this indifference a variety of circumſtances concurred, the ſource of which ſeems clearly to be traceable to VOLTAIRE, who was, probably, jealous that MARMONTEL ſhould write tragedy. Le KAIN, VOLTAIRE's firm and intimate friend, ſtirred up the actors to reject the corrections of MARMONTEL; who, among all the company, had no

certainly he was more qualified. *La Bergere des Alpes*, *Le Huron*, *Lucile*, *Silvain*, *Zemire et Azor*, *L'Ami de la Maiſon*, and others, are all in the true ſtyle of the comic opera, and written with the ſame delicacy and nature which pervade his *Moral Tales*, a work that has been held in ſuch high eſtimation by the world.

ſupport but Madmoiſelle CLAIRON. On her LE KAIN was inſtructed by his principal how to be revenged; and, when the piece was performed at court previous to its public appearance, he got his whole part altered by a Monſ. COLARDEAU, ſo that, though the ſpeeches retained the ſenſe originally given them, the expreſſions were ſo different that CLAIRON, whoſe great excellence was an attention to thoſe who were ſpeaking to her, was quite thrown out. On the other hand the audience ſuppoſed the fault to lie with MARMONTEL and threw all the odium on him. He appealed, however; LE KAIN was reprimanded and ordered to expunge all that COLARDEAU had written. Egged on by VOLTAIRE, who rejoiced that the prohibition had gone no farther, he determined to abide by this injunction to the letter. When, therefore, the piece came to be performed on the theatre, he took out certainly all that had been introduced by COLARDEAU; but, inſtead of ſubſtituting MARMONTEL's alterations, he ſupplied the deficiencies from ROTROU himſelf. The conſequence was that CLAIRON was as much at a ſtand as ever, and MARMONTEL hiſſed once more for what he had not written. Being then author of *Du Mercure*, he appealed to the public and inſerted a letter, written by one of the actors, which was anſwered by LE KAIN, who was again accuſed of fomenting the whole quarrel; and thus appeal ſucceeded appeal till the public were tired of the ſubject and MARMONTEL, certainly ill treated, though many of the arguments were greatly to the honour of ROTROU, of whoſe reputation his advocates affected to be very tender, reſolved never again to tread tragic ground.

DIDEROT claims a right to be mentioned here, though he wrote but two comedies, one of which, *Le Pere de Famille*, had conſiderable ſucceſs; *Le Fils Naturel* did not ſucceed ſo well. The truth is, DIDEROT and MERCIER wrote too naturally, too critically true, too accurate for the multitude. The ſituations of their characters were happy; they drew the paſſions in their moſt perfect attitudes, and coloured them with a fidelity through which all their various ſhades were diſcoverable; DIDEROT, however, much more than MERCIER; and it is upon this account that he is leſs ſkilful in the conſtruction of his pieces; for while MERCIER introduces no incident, however ſtriking, but what naturally leads to one general intereſt, DIDEROT, by attempting to create perpetual intereſt, involves his ſubject in perplexity. But he would have reformed this had he written more for the ſtage. The world, however, will find their conſolation in thoſe other works in which he has improved and embelliſhed literature.

We come now to conſider the productions of FAVART, ANSEAUME, and SEDAINE, whoſe pieces critically aſcertained the true province of the comic opera, which, however, never had ſettled into abſolute regularity till MARMONTEL's Tales gave an idea of the exact nature of what their plots ſhould be formed. *Ninette a la Cour*, *La Cherchauſe D'Eſ-*

prit, *Le Coq de Village*, *La Roſiere de Salency*, *La Bohémienne*, and many others written by FAVART, boaſt that natural and ſimple regularity of which MARMONTEL's *Annette et Lubin*, and other productions firſt gave the idea. *Mazet*, *Les Deux Chaiſſeurs et la Laitiere*, *L'Ecole de la Jeuneſſe*, *La Clochette*, and *La Coquette de Village*, of ANSEAUME, are again of this deſcription, and ſo are *Le Roi et le Fermier*, *Roſe et Colas*, *Blaiſe le Savetier*, *Le Jardinier et ſon Seigneur*, and *On S'aviſe Jamais de Tout*, of SEDAINE.

Each of theſe pieces conſiſts of ſome pleaſant ſubject on which the play and management of the circumſtances turn, and out of which ſuch incidents ariſe as beget intereſt and lead naturally to a juſt and proper denouement. The ſongs in the pieces of theſe authors are well written; but, upon the whole, thoſe of FAVART are rather the beſt. There are many other pieces of this nature written by theſe and other authors, and ſome of them have been on the Engliſh ſtage; among which are *La Fee Urgelle*, *Les Moiſſonneurs*, *Le Tableau Parlant*, *Le Déſerteur*, and *Richard Cœur de Lion*; I ſhall, therefore, find a better time and place to ſpeak of them.

To return to VOLTAIRE. *Nanine*, a comedy taken from *Pamela*, was brought forward by VOL-

TAIRE in 1749. This ſubject was ſo admired and RICHARDSON ſo celebrated in FRANCE, that the general cry was to have it on the ſtage. LA CHAUSSEE tried his hand at it and failed; ſo did BOISSI. VOLTAIRE, however, ſucceeded greatly *, though it muſt be confeſſed he has treated the ſubject very inſipidly.

Semiramis was firſt performed in 1748. This tragedy, having been ſtolen from CREBILLON, and once before, as we have ſeen, brought forward without ſucceſs, the whole hue and cry of wits hunted it down without mercy; in conſequence of which its reception at ſome of the early repreſentations was again doubtful. It gained ground, however, and afterwards drew a prodigious concourſe of ſpectators to the theatre, who did it the juſtice it really merited; for, though there are faults in the plan, yet it is ſtrongly written and ſome of the ſituations are very affecting †.

---

* PIRON pretended not to like N*anine*, or, perhaps, did not really like it, for Heaven knows it is dull enough, VOLTAIRE aſked him why he did not hiſs it; "'Twas impoſſible," ſaid PIRON, "a man "cannot hiſs and yawn at the ſame time."

† VOLTAIRE did himſelf no ſervice in this buſineſs by introducing the ghoſt of NINUS after he had ridiculed the ghoſt in *Hamlet*.

VOLTAIRE's next tragedy was *Oreſte*. It was performed once and withdrawn for eight days, after which, with the help of many corrections, it did tolerably well. *Rome Sauvée* came out in 1752, it was reſpectably received. To theſe ſucceeded *Le Duc de Foix*, which alſo gave ſatisfaction. It is impoſſible to deny that theſe three tragedies are greatly written; and that, whatever may be their faults, they confeſs the hand of a maſter in every line. A true poet poſſeſſed of a male and nervous mind.

L'Orphelin de la Chine, and *L'Ecoſſaiſe*, the firſt performed 1756, and the other in 1760, will come in among the articles of the Engliſh ſtage. *Tancred*, alſo performed in 1760, had conſiderable ſucceſs. The ſubject called forth all the ſtrength of VOLTAIRE's talents, and it muſt be confeſſed he has well employed them; but *L'Ecueil du Sage*, a comedy, produced in 1762, was received very coldly, and had it not been written by VOLTAIRE, would not have been heard through on the firſt night. *Olimpie*, a tragedy, brought out in 1764, had better ſucceſs, but by no means ſuch a reception as ſome of his former pieces.

Les Scythes, performed in 1767, is a work of conſiderable merit. The judicious critic will eaſily

diſcern that it is not only written by a poet, but a philoſopher. It did not, however, ſucceed greatly at firſt, being like many of VOLTAIRE's plays written in a hurry and taken back for correction*. His next piece, *Les Triumvirs*, was damned, owing, it is alledged, to his keeping back his name. Certainly it did not deſerve ſo ſevere a fate, and it is probable that had he, according to cuſtom, acknowledged its faults and corrected them, it might have been made an acquiſition to the theatre.

The laſt piece but one, by VOLTAIRE, was *Sophoniſbe*, performed in 1768. This tragedy was nothing more than the alteration already ſpoken of from MAIRET, or rather THEOPHILE VIAUD, from a ſubject that had been ſo frequently treated by other authors. It certainly had merit, but had ſo little novelty to recommend it, that its ſucceſs was inconſiderable, which, perhaps, determined VOLTAIRE to leave the theatre; for, though we find among his works eleven pieces, beſides thoſe already enumerated, not one of them was performed except at his private

* In one of the public prints of that year, are theſe words: "We "underſtand that Monſieur VOLTAIRE has ſent the actors a tragedy, "in his manner, called *Les Scythes*; and informed them, at the ſame "time, that he wrote it in twelve days. The actors, to be even "with him, have returned it with an humble requeſt that he will "take twelve months to correct it."

theatre in GENEVA. Theſe are of different diſcriptions, but many of them have great merit, *Les Guebres* is written with aſtoniſhing force and grandeur, *Samſon*, an opera, is moſt admirably deſigned, and charmingly written *; and, in *Socrate*, there is ſome of the ſweeteſt proſe, particularly the love ſcenes, that can be conceived.

There was, however, another piece which VOLTAIRE brought with him from FERNEI, when, like a hare, he came to PARIS to die. This was a tragedy called *Irene*, and it was performed at the French theatre, during an interval in which he flattered himſelf he ſhould recover from the ſevere illneſs with which he had been attacked on his coming to PARIS, and,

---

* "A comedy called *Samſon*, ſays VOLTAIRE, was a great while "performed in ITALY. It was tranſlated in FRANCE by a man "named ROMAGNESI. This piece was brought out at a place "which was anciently the palace of the Duke of BURGUNDY. It "was printed and dedicated to the Duc D'ORLEANS, Regent of "FRANCE. In this ſublime performance HARLEQUIN, SAMSON'S "valet, keeps a turkey-cock at bay while his maſter takes the gates "of the city of GAZA upon his ſhoulders. In 1732 this ſubject was "attempted to be revived at the opera, embelliſhed by the muſic of "RAMEAU; but it was not permitted; for as the turkey-cock had "no place in the piece, it was conſidered as a very ſerious buſineſs, "and improper to be repreſented; and, in other reſpects, they were "glad enough to mortify RAMEAU, who had too much merit not "to excite envy. Nevertheleſs, at the ſame time, they made no "ſcruple of performing *Jephta* from the Old Teſtament, and the "*Prodigal Son* from the New."

indeed, afflicted some time before *. This was the consummation, not of his glory, as he fondly called it, but of his vanity. Before the piece began, BRIZARD, the oldest of the actors, entered the box

* At this time VOLTAIRE himself was acting a most miserable farce. On his arrival in PARIS, he was visited and enquired after with more solicitude than if he had been an ambassador, or a minister of state. Nothing was spoken of but VOLTAIRE. Nothing that could flatter his excessive vanity was omitted. Every syllable he uttered was cherished like the prophesies of an oracle. His bon mots, his sallies, his most trifling expressions were retailed in all the journals and in all public companies. Happy they who caught from him a complacent glance, a condescending nod, or a gracious smile. In the mean time, some individuals, who also knew how to act farces, resolved to make his folly contribute to their interest. Among these was a certain Abbe GAULTIER, a namesake at least of a farce actor already spoken of. This man, who formerly had been a Jesuit, thought he could not better ingratiate himself with the Archbishop of PARIS than by bringing about VOLTAIRE's conversion to the church after he had been so long considered as a notorious apostate. For this purpose he determined to enter the lists with the actors and the philosophers, and combat with them lustily for the soul of VOLTAIRE. He pestered him with letters; and the more he was tormented with bodily and mental infirmity the more he harrassed him; till, at length, the poor poet, with all his fear of eternity before him, was reduced to the most pitiable state of pusillanimity and irresolution. One minute he sent for the priest, the next he denied himself to him. Now he wrote a recantation of his errors; presently he retracted it. The Abbe in the mean time was under the necessity of putting every art in practice to carry his point, for he had DIDEROT, D'ALEMBERT, MARMONTEL, and others to manage, who wanted the poor philosopher to die in peace. In proportion, however, as the patient's apprehensions encreased, he gained the ascendancy. A full and complete abjuration of all the crimes VOLTAIRE had committed against the christian religion was drawn up,

and placed a crown of laurel upon his head, which he with an affected modeſty attempted to return, at the ſame time exclaiming, "What will you over-"whelm me? Will you kill me with exceſs of

---

couched in terms equivalent to a confeſſion that all that he had ever written was full of lies, a terrible prohibition for an author; to deſtroy the credit of a long life of ſtudy and its fruits contained in an hundred volumes by the ſingle daſh of the pen! This recantation was to be publiſhed in all the newſpapers in EUROPE, and it contained in particular a very artful condition; which was, that, as it had been reported that every precaution would be taken when he ſhould be near his end, either by threats or denunciations to make him confeſs and ſign whatever might privately ſerve the purpoſes of the church, or its miniſters, and that, therefore, all he ſaid or did under ſuch reſtraint ought to go for nothing, he not only abjured all knowledge of theſe or any other ſimilar inſinuations, but proteſted that whatever he ſhould confeſs, and whatever he ſhould ſign, would be the unbiaſſed effect of full conviction and a due ſenſe of the manifold crimes he had committed, together with a neceſſity for a ſincere, a contrite, and an unequivocal repentance. The conditions were hard, and it required as much management to get them accepted as boldneſs to propoſe them; but nothing could intimidate the Abbe. He found he had hooked his fiſh, and it was his buſineſs to play with it properly in order to bring it ſafely to his hand. He enjoyed his amuſement, however, with rather too much wantonneſs; for juſt as he was on the point of gaining the reward of his dexterity, death broke the line and away went his prey to the bottom. In ſhort, juſt as VOLTAIRE had manifeſted an apparent conſent, for an abſolute one he never manifeſted, to theſe hard terms, he fell into a delirium and died, before he had received extreme unction, or done any other thing neceſſary to his being conſidered as a chriſtian; and, therefore, though ſtatues and mauſoleums were erected to his memory, and he was deified at the theatre, the church refuſed him the rights of ſepulture; nay, what is very extraordinary, they refuſed to take their fees for fear of contamination.

" glory?" The tragedy was then repreſented; after this VOLTAIRE's ſtatue was placed on the ſtage; and, while the actors and actreſſes crowned it with laurel and performed a moſt ridiculous and extravagant ceremony, the poet received all the honours of an apotheoſis.

Whether this exceſs of glory, or the exceſſive importunities of the church, and his friends on one ſide, who wiſhed him to die a chriſtian, or the followers of his doctrines on the other, who were ſolicitous that he ſhould remain what they called a philoſopher to the laſt, would have atchieved the victory it is hard to ſay: the conflict certainly accelerated his end. Pride, weakneſs, vanity, mortification, regret, fear, and a thouſand other warring paſſions agitated and convulſed his frame; till, at length, a compaſſionate delirium came to his relief, and he died a warning to ſpeculatiſts, and an awful example of unavailing compunction. This event happened May 30, 1778, when he was nearly eighty four years of age.

The church having forbid that the remains of this extraordinary man ſhould be buried in conſecrated ground, his relations with difficulty got leave to tranſport the body to FERNEI; but they managed to procure its burial at an Abbey of BERNARDINES at SCELLIERES, in the dioceſe of TROYE in CHAM-

PAIGNE to which place the news of the prohibition had not reached. The biſhop of TROYES, however, got intelligence of the buſineſs and ſent to forbid the interment, but the order came too late; it was, therefore, agreed that the body ſhould not be taken up, but the biſhop laid the chapel under an interdiction, and the prior was depoſed*.

To go over the large field of VOLTAIRE's productions would be both unneceſſary and improper. They are in all recollections and all libraries; and we have nothing to do here with any thing but his dramatic productions. Theſe, though there is ſcarcely any thing original in them, are the beſt his country can boaſt: a ſtrange but a true declaration. VOLTAIRE's judgment was ſtrong, faithful, and penetrating, to a degree of wonder; and his recollection was ſo vivid that his memory ſerved him in the place of genius. Thus he was any writer he pleaſed, and better than the writer himſelf, becauſe he could diveſt himſelf of partiality. The obſervation, I confeſs, is againſt all rule, all example, but it is, nevertheleſs, true in VOLTAIRE; who on every poſſible ſubject could make you receive that as his

* A wit upon this occaſion wrote a diſtitch which may be thus tranſlated:

Here, of grave monks among a holy neſt,
Reſts he, who never ſuffered monks to reſt.

own which he did nothing but borrow and embelliſh; and, to prove that this is exactly what he thought and felt, his own words are that "originality is no-"thing but judicious imitation."

He moulded CORNEILLE, RACINE, and CREBILLON to his own fancy; and, whether the forms he thought proper to make them wear were ſingle or complicated likeneſſes, the copies were always better than the originals. In *Brutus* he portrayed CORNEILLE, in *Zaire* RACINE, and in *Mahomet* CREBILLON *. Yet were neither of them injured. "A literary thief," ſays a wit, "ſhould always "murder his man, for what uſe is life to him after "he is become a cripple." but whether VOLTAIRE ſtole a feature from one, or a limb from another, or in what way ſoever committed his depredations, ſtill the perſons plundered ſuſtained no injury; their like the polypus, and their pockets, like the purſe of FORTUNATUS, ſtill retained their original proportion and value.

"My rivals," ſaid he, "accuſe me without

* The critics of his own country have gone farther and advanced that in the *Mort de Cæſar* he has excelled SHAKESPEAR, but as this would open a new ſcene of contention for which I am not ſufficiently forward, I ſhall diſmiſs the ſubject till I have an opportunity of letting SHAKESPEAR ſpeak for himſelf, when I may, probably, ſhew that cloſe application to the beauties of SHAKESPEAR enabled VOLTAIRE, in great meaſure, to excel his countrymen.

" mercy of having pillaged both the ancients andthe
" moderns, forgetting that they do the ſame thing.
" The fact is, we all ſeek for ornaments which
" may beſt embelliſh the ſubjects we treat; and,
" if they could ſteal to as good a purpoſe as I do,
" my now ſuperior roguery would excite no envy,
" and thus I ſhould hear nothing of their abuſe."

To go further into this would be not only to involve theſe obſervations in a review of the numberleſs diſputes, cavils, and heart burnings, from which, owing to inſatiable and inordinate vanity, he was never free; but alſo of thoſe authors, actors, bookſellers, academicians, prieſts, ſtateſmen, in ſhort every poſſible deſcription of perſon with whom he was eternally ſome way or other in hot water. I muſt, therefore, I own unwillingly, take leave of a ſubject which I ſhall hereafter have opportunity collaterally to reſume with ſaying, that the tragedies of VOLTAIRE, which, as ſpecimens of erudition, are correct, elegant, and claſſical, as models of dramatic conſtruction, are maſterly, artful, and judicious, and, as leſſons of morality, are beautiful, winning, and exemplary, cannot fail to enſure him a permanent literary fame, while great and extenſive knowledge, keen and penetrating judgment, and perfect and refined taſte are objects of admiration.

CHAP. XII.

MUSICIANS, ACTORS, REGULATIONS, AND THE CONCLUSION OF THE FRENCH STAGE.

FROM the moment RAMEAU reformed the muſic of the ſerious opera, the ſtrange, trite, unmeaning jigs that had been dinned in the ears of every frequenter of the comic opera, and every paſſer-by in the ſtreets, began to aſſume ſomething like melody; and, while the ſtyle of the more important works of PERGOLESI, GALLUPPI, and their cotemporaries, made up the grandeur of French muſic, regulated by RAMEAU, the Venetian Ballads and the other lighter muſic of the Italian Serenatas, and Intermezzos, changed the complexion and gave a delicacy to the Vaudvilles.

DUNI, following the example of RAMEAU, improved the comic opera as RAMEAU has improved the ſerious opera. He was afterwards followed, among many others, by MONSIGNY, by PHILIDORE, and, at length, by GRETRY, at which time French muſic had gone beyond its ſtrength, and the ſtring was ſtretched till it cracked.

Duni was chaſte and correct, but he ſeemed to compoſe tremblingly leſt he ſhould be thought an innovator. Monsigny, and Philidore, had more ſpirit, and, catching fire like Rameau from the Italian ſchool, threw that genius into a blaze which only wanted ſuch a ſpark to illuminate it. From theſe, and from their imitators, came all thoſe French Minuets, Gavottes, Allemandes, and Jigs, many of which, in the Ballad Operas and Dances, made up the delight of the Engliſh from thirty to forty years ago. At length appeared Piccini, who, though a compoſer of great ingenuity, was really an innovator. This man, by ſtrangling melody with accompanyment, firſt taught the Engliſh to deſpiſe the ſimplicity of Galluppi, and afterwards went to France where he ſtunned his auditors out of the beauty of Rameau, Monsigny, and Philidore; till unfortunately meeting with his counterpart in Gretry, the French, ever capricious, choſe to be ſurprized rather than delighted, and their muſical taſte became ſo vitiated that now they have no muſical taſte at all.

Without going over the requiſites in which the French ſuppoſe the merits of their actors to conſiſt, and which had better be conſidered upon a compariſon with the Engliſh actors, I ſhall content myſelf at preſent with ſaying that, though they call

Baron the French Roscius, and ſpeak with rapture of many of their performers, yet they never fail in the ſame breath to extol Garrick above all actors ancient and modern.

Indeed little more than declamation could be expected from the repreſentations of characters who diſcourſed upon their moſt common affairs in rhime. It is notorious that, before *Merope* was performed, tragedy was ſpoken in a manner little ſhort of recitative, and acted with almoſt the regularity of a minuet. If a character was to be ſaved from a precipice, he might break his neck and welcome if he had not patience to ſtay till his preſerver had gone through all the dancing poſitions. Rage, grief, love and pity were all ſpoken in the ſame cadence, and danced in the ſame meaſure.

A trait of nature in Madmoiſelle Du Mesnil broke the charm. In *Merope* ſhe ſaw her ſon in danger and, fancying herſelf the character ſhe repreſented, threw into her face all the agony of a deſpairing mother; and, darting acroſs the ſtage, cried out, in a frenzy of tenderneſs and apprehenſion, "Barbarian he is my ſon." But we ſhall have leiſure to ſpeak of their general merits; at preſent let us talk briefly of them particularly.

From BARON ſprung, either immediately or collaterally, many of the beſt French actors. He married Madmoiſelle LE NOIR, ſiſter of THORILLIERE and Madame DANCOURT. His ſon, who has been already ſpoken of, died young; but he left behind him a ſon and two daughters, who were all performers of merit; the ſon, in particular, retired with a penſion.

DANCOURT appears to have been a ſound actor, but his great merit lay in training his company, in which he manifeſted the ſtrongeſt good ſenſe. He read remarkably well, and knew how to teach to others the beauties of thoſe authors whoſe works were confided to his care. He was continually conſidering in what manner he might render the actors reſpectable in the eyes of their fellow citizens *.

---

* LOUIS the fourteenth paid DANCOURT particular attention. He frequently read his pieces to the king in his cloſet; and one day as he exerted himſelf a good deal, the room being very warm, he felt himſelf ſuddenly ill; on which the king ran inſtantly to the window and threw it open to give him air. Another time, having ſome ſuit to preſer to the king, he encountered him as he was coming from high maſs, and, retreating as the king advanced, he nearly tumbled down a ſtaircaſe that he had forgot was behind him; at which the king caught him by the arm ſaying, "I applaud your "zeal for your company, and think your demand ſo reaſonable that "I ſhall comply with it, eſpecially as you plead their cauſe ſo re-

In having ſpoken of POISSON as an author it was impoſſible to avoid giving an outline of him as an actor. His principal merit was in repreſenting comic parts, and in particular the part of CRISPIN, and other valets in that ſtyle. He was very much admired by the court, and LOUIS the fourteenth gave him many proofs of his favour and liberality. POISSON had two ſons who performed with ſome reputation. One of them left behind him two volumes of plays, ſome of which had tolerable ſucceſs.

DUFRESNE was an excellent actor, but he was a curious character. By always fancying himſelf the king or the ſtateſman he repreſented, he was miſerable when after pulling off his trappings he could diſcover nothing but an actor, born for the contempt of the public, and fated to be excom-

---

" ſpectfully, but I don't ſee why your complaiſance ſhould make you " break your neck." The preſident HARLAI did not think DANCOURT and his company entitled to ſo much conſideration. When at the head of the troop he went to carry alms for the poor he acquitted himſelf handſomely of his commiſſion and made a brilliant ſpeech. HARLAI was at the head of the Bureau. DANCOURT took the opportunity of enforcing that the charity of the actors ought to exempt them from excommunication, but he was cut ſhort by HARLAI, "DANCOURT," ſaid the Preſident, " we have ears to " hear you, and hands to receive your alms, but we have not " tongues to anſwer you."

municated *. It is said that in the hands of BEAUBOURG and others, who succeeded BARON, the art of acting had degenerated; but that, when DUFRESNE appeared, he restored all its excellence with added graces of his own.

We will pass by among the men LA NOUE; who, though he inherited but few requisites from nature, was an actor of great general merit; LE GRAND, who, though a good actor, and by no means a bad author, was neither a BARON nor a MOLIERE; MONTMENY, who was merely carressed as the son of LE SAGE, and QUINAULT, who as well as a good actor, was a pasiable musician, and many others; and we will hurry over, among the women, the names of JOUVENOT who retired with a pension; GAUSSIN, who was the original ZAIRE; LE COUVREUR, an elegant and accomplished woman, and an admirable actress in tragedy; MAUPIN, who was an excellent actress, who in partiality to her own sex was a perfect SAPPHO; who frequently

* The pride of DUFRESNE was insufferable. "I am," said he to a friend, "blindly followed, extolled, adored. How? Only on "the stage. Is this happiness? "A popular error, Sir." "Why "I would prefer the state of being a gentleman of an ancient race, "living comfortably in his family mansion, even with no more than "twenty thousand crowns a year, and surrounded with but a "dozen servants.

was miſtaken for a man, and who fought a duel and ſet fire to a convent; the three ſiſters of QUINAULT neither of which was deſtitute of merit; DUCLOS, who was many years celebrated in tragedy; DUBOIS, who retired with a penſion; DANGEVILLE, in whoſe praiſe for forty years all the journals, all the hiſtories of the theatre, all the dramatic annals were ſo laviſh even to the quantity of ſeveral volumes: theſe and many more we are conſtrained to paſs by that we may take a view, a very tranſient one however, of that celebrated ſet of actors and actreſſes who kept up the reputation of the theatre during the reign of VOLTAIRE, and who were upon its eſtabliſhment in the year 1775.

LE KAIN, who was the dramatic *elève*. and the intimate friend of VOLTAIRE, had many difficulties to ſurmount before he ſtood a chance of ſucceſs. Both his figure and his voice were againſt him; but by a moſt extraordinary and lively ſenſibility, after a greal deal of art and perſeverance he overcame all theſe natural defects. His acting was like a well painted ſcene; the touches were mere daubing but the effect was aſtoniſhing *. The whole of this

* As LE KAIN has been preſumptuouſly by ſome authors conſidered as ſuperior to GARRICK, probably out of compliment to VOLTAIRE, who conſidered himſelf as ſuperior to SHAKESPEAR, I ſhall have a better opportunity, when I ſpeak of our ROSCIUS, of condemning thoſe gentlemen through their own words.

actors life was conſecrated to VOLTAIRE; nay, that he might be complaiſant to the laſt, though but forty-nine years of age, the actor left the world within a few weeks of the poet.

PREVILLE was certainly an admirable actor through all the round of comedy; and it is natural to ſuppoſe, by all the accounts we have of him, that he was the beſt the French ſtage ever knew. It was ever the cuſtom to keep a French performer cloſe to his *role;* and as we ſay, once a captain always a captain, ſo one might ſay of a French actor, once CRISPIN always CRISPIN. But PREVILLE performed every kind of comic part, and always happily. His merit alone was the cauſe of their reviving almoſt all the comedies of MOLIERE; and to the new characters which were written, whether FREEPORT in *L'Eccoſſaiſe*, FIGARO in *Le Barbier De Seville*, MICHAUD in the *Partie de chaſſe*, *D'Henry IV.* or any other of theſe various characters of which he ſtampt the reputation, it is impoſſible to deny but that he had as much good ſenſe as verſatility *.

MOLE performed in hard, honeſt, blunt cha-

* I am happy to allow this, and ſhall hereafter allow him much more when in its place, I ſhall nevertheleſs ſhew PREVILLE greatly overmatched by KING.

racters with great truth and juſtice. He was a different figure, and much more a Frenchman, but thoſe who recollect YATES may, from that recollection, form an idea of MOLE's acting. I do not ſuppoſe the *Miſanthrope*, *Le Homme Singulier*, *Le Glorieux*, and other parts of that deſcription were ever ſo reſpectably performed.

BELLECOUR, who was originally a painter and a ſcholar of WANLOO, left the bruſh for the buſkin. He firſt, however, appeared in tragedy, but his own good ſenſe pointed out the true bent of his talents, and he ſtood high in reputation in 1775 as a comic actor*.

BRIZARD was an actor of conſiderable merit. The advantages of a noble and graceful figure, and a clear and powerful voice, were heightened in him by a ſuſceptible mind, a ſtrong underſtanding, and a correct education. He was born to repreſent the heroes of the great CORNEILLE; and, perhaps, in *The Roman Father*, and indeed all other deſcriptions of dignified tragedy, no French actor has gone beyond him †. He enjoyed many years a ſplendid repu-

* There is ſome ſimilarity between this actor and BANNISTER, by whom, however, BELLECOUR is infinitely excelled, as will hereafter be ſhewn.

† BRIZARD ſeems to have been a mixture of BOOTH, QUIN, and SHERIDAN.

tation, and then retired to a beautiful retreat, where he built himſelf an elegant houſe, and filled it with pictures of his own painting.

DUGAZON, an actor of gaiety and addreſs, followed the ſteps of PREVILLE; running, however, more into caricature. When PREVILLE retired with his wife, which happened at the time the theatre loſt BRIZARD, DUGAZON got on wonderfully; and being named Profeſſor at *De L'Ecole Royal de Declamation*, he attained a very high ſituation in his profeſſion *.

DESESSARTS ſeems to have been in comedy ſomething in the ſtyle of what BRIZARD was in tragedy; by no means, however, his equal; for though the Liſimons and the Gerontes of the French are parts that require good ſenſe and a critical underſtanding, yet they do not want ſuch power and exertion as the old men in tragedy. There was, however, an amiable and benevolent manner in DESESSARTS that gave great reſpectability to thoſe kind of characters; and, though his acting was not the prominent feature of the picture, yet it was the happy middle tint without which the picture could have had no prominence at all.

DAUBERVAL, AUGE, BOURET, DALAINVAL,

* DUGAZON, though a much more ſuperficial actor, conveys a ſtrong idea of WOODWARD.

and MONVEL, were all actors of reſpectability. Having, however, gone beyond my preſcribed bounds, I ſhall for the preſent let them paſs by and ſpeak of LA RIVE, an actor of the higheſt celebrity, who ſeized the dramatic crown from the head of LE KAIN. LA RIVE, profiting by the inſtructions of the incomparable CLAIRON, and a long attention to the indefatigable labours of LE KAIN, came on the ſtage at once an accompliſhed actor.

Nature that had done but little for LE KAIN, had done every thing for LA RIVE. His figure, voice, manner, were not only correct and engaging, but they were preciſely what thoſe requiſites ſhould be in an actor. They were in themſelves intereſting, but, under the controul of that mind which actuated them, they were irreſiſtable. LA RIVE with theſe advantages gave an added force to the ſplendor that tragedy had acquired under LE KAIN. LE KAIN, having every thing to acquire, laboured with the inſtructions and aſſiſtance of VOLTAIRE, and his own ſtrong mind and excellent underſtanding, till he attained perfection almoſt in oppoſition to nature; while LA RIVE, inſtructed by CLAIRON, ſtudied and imbibed the perfection of LE KAIN, and truſted to nature to perform the reſt.

In ſpeaking of the principal French actreſſes I

ſhall begin with Madmoiſelle DUMESNIL; for, though VOLTAIRE ſays he was charmed with CLAIRON till he ſaw ſuperior merit in DUMESNIL, yet it is certain that the latter performed in PARIS in 1737, and that CLAIRON, except in ſome few trifling parts which ſhe acted at the Italian theatre, was not celebrated till 1743, the very year when DUMESNIL aſtoniſhed the public by a diſplay of extraordinary talents in *Merope*. DUMESNIL had a ſtronger mind and more nature than CLAIRON; CLAIRON more art and management than DUMESNIL. One declaimed with judgment, the other uttered with feeling. Upon the whole, I know not if the reader can have a better idea of them than by a recollection of Mrs. CRAWFORD and Mrs. YATES, in ALICIA and JANE SHORE.

Madmoiſelle RAUCOURT, and Madame VESTRIS, properly follow DUMESNIL and CLAIRON. The firſt was an impaſſioned and enthuſiaſtic actreſs, who is ſaid to have given to *Medea* and other bold and violent characters a ſpirit and a warmth that had never before been thrown into them; the other, who was the ſcholar and intimate friend of CLAIRON, kept cloſe to her ſtyle and manner in which ſhe often equalled and ſometimes excelled her. Madmoiſelle HUS was an actreſs in a more extenſive ſtyle, but not ſo excellent as either of the others.

She was well received, however, both in tragedy and comedy.

The leading comic actreſſes were Madame BELLECOUR, Madame DUGAZON, and Madmoiſelle CONTAT. Madame BELLECOUR continued on the ſtage a great number of years. and was always received with the greateſt applauſe and admiration. The names of PREVILLE and BELLECOUR were inſeperable; they conſtantly performed in the ſame pieces and with the ſame reputation. Madame DUGAZON performed incomparably characters of ſimplicity; not that this was her only merit, for parts of more intelligence, where deportment and demeanour were more eſſential, and which were diſtinguiſhed by art and cunning, received at her hands every juſtice the moſt ſanguine author could wiſh; and if in PREVILLE and BELLECOUR, there appeared a faint reſemblance of KING and ABINGTON; in DUGAZON and his wife might be diſcerned a likeneſs of WOODWARD and ELLIOT.

As for Madmoiſelle CONTAT, ſhe performed univerſally in comedy, and undertook the characters that had been perſonated by Madame PREVILLE, Mlle DANGEVILLE, and Mlle D'OLIGNY; juſt as Mad. DUGAZON ſucceeded Mlle LUZI, and Mlle FANIER. I ſhould with pleaſure pay a more elaborate tribute to her merit,

as well as to the reſt of thoſe whoſe names will preſently appear upon the eſtabliſhment at the year 1775, but that I have already exceeded the bounds I had preſcribed myſelf for a diſplay of the ſtage in FRANCE.

The regulations of the French theatre were extremely ſimilar to thoſe of the Italian theatre. In 1757, the king revoked all former laws and eſtabliſhed new ones more to the intereſt and comfort of the performers; who, in the ſame manner as the Italians, poſſeſſed the property and divided the profits, after ſubmitting to ſuch juſt and neceſſary proviſoes as were very ſenſibly and equitably laid down for them.

Theſe were drawn up entirely upon the ſame principle, and carried into effect in the ſame manner as the others. The ſemainiers, treaſurers, and all who were entruſted with the regulations, were obliged, as before, to ſubmit their conduct to the Intendant *Des Menus*, to be reported for the inſpection of the king, who took them immediately under his patronage. So that to be further particular would be only to repeat what has been ſeen already. In 1775 the company ſtood thus:

Actors. LE KAIN, BELLECOUR, PREVILLE, BRIZARD, MOLE, DAUBERVAL, AUGE, BOURET,

Dalainval, Monvel, Dugazon, and Desessarts. Actors retired on penſions. Bellemont, Pontueil, Courville, Seguin, and Reymond. Actreſſes. Dumesnil, Drouin, Bellecour, Hus, Preville, Mole, Doligny, Luzi, Fanier, Saintval, Dugazon, Veſtris, La Chassaigne, and Raucourt. Actreſſes retired on penſions. Bonioli, and St. Gervais.

Compoſer and ballet maſter; Deshayes, firſt dancer Desnoyers, principal dancers Guiardelle, Victor, and Henri. Firſt female dancer Constance Cholet, principal female dancers Adelaide, Sophie, and Noziere. To which were added ſix figurants and ſix figurantes, and ſix ſupernumeraries. The band conſiſted of twenty-five performers.

Thus have we taken a view of the French ſtage from its commencement to the time when it had attained the higheſt pinnacle of its reputation; from which moment it has ever ſince gradually declined. This ſubject is equal to a much larger ſcope and extent than I have been able to afford it, otherwiſe I might have been more juſt to a greater number of authors, muſicians, actors and others; whoſe various merits and reputations deſerve a more competent though not a more impartial hiſtorian.

We have ſeen, however, enough to ſhew, through a long ſerious of years, genius and merit ſtruggling with every kind of difficulty, and the moſt meritorious exertions offered up as a ſacrifice at the ſhrine of caprice. We have ſeen one Cardinal turn actor, and another fidler. We have ſeen Kings and Princes dancing at the Opera, and we have ſeen the conſiſtent French, with the King Queen and Royal Family at their head, ſhed tears at the ſame play yeſterday in the form of a tragedy, at the theatre, and to day laugh at it, in the form of a droll, at the fair. We have ſeen prieſts transform themſelves into actors and uſe nonſenſe and obſcenity in the pulpit, and we have ſeen actors, in good ſound ſenſe, ridicule prieſts on the ſtage *. We have ſeen dancers,

* VOLTAIRE inſtances this, very humourouſly, in a letter to the Duke DE LA VALIERE, where he inſiſts that the Myſteries, which were performed in the ſixteenth century, were not ſo indecent or ſo full of impiety as the ſermons of the prieſts, who, under the ſanction of preaching in Latin, had opportunity of being as brutal as they thought proper. To prove this he thus tranſlates a paſſage from a ſermon of the CORDELIER MAILLARD, in which the prieſt means to admoniſh the faſhionable ladies of thoſe times who wore embroidery. "You ſay you are dreſſed out according to your con-
" ditions: All the devils in hell fly away with your conditions and
" you too my fine ladies. You may take it into your heads to tell
" me that your huſbands do not give you all theſe fine ornaments,
" and gorgeous trappings, but that you earn them by the labour of
" your bodies: Thirty thouſand devils fly away with the labour of
" your bodies my good ladies."

tygers, and flying horſes, trample upon genius, taſte, and literature. In ſhort we have ſeen LA SERRE, a miſerable book-duſter, triumph over the great CORNEILLE; PRADON, a ſupercilious dunce and a pliant tool, conquer the tender RACINE; and DU BELLOI, who for ſubſcribing to inordinate French vanity, was firſt honoured with every mark of diſtinction and afterwards left to die in extreme indigence, obtain a complete victory over the truly celebrated VOLTAIRE.

Let us now turn our eyes to ENGLAND.

BOOK IV.

ENGLISH STAGE TO SHAKESPEAR'S FIRST PLAY.

CHAP. I.

TENDENCY OF THIS WORK.

THE Engliſh reader will now ſee that I have ſo long kept him at a diſtance from his native country only that it may be the more dear to him on his return. The traveller, who has croſſed ſeas and traverſed empires to ſeek for objects of wonder and admiration, cheriſhes the recollection of the pleaſure and inſtruction he has received, only in proportion as it fits him for enjoyment in the boſom of his family.

So, if I have endeavoured in ATHENS to trace the dramatic art from the rude bards at the time of THESEUS to the poliſhed writers at the fall of GREECE; if I have deſcribed exotic manners tranſ-

planted to ROME, and there pining through a ſickly and rickety exiſtence; if I have deplored the buffooneries of ITALY, where the heterogeneous faragoes of the Romans were caricatured; if I have wondered at the aſtoniſhing fertility and redundancy of the Spaniſh drama, like a tree too luxuriant to be pruned, and charged with too much fruit to ripen; if I have ſmiled at the booriſh farces of the Dutch, and if I have given more at length the origin and progreſs of the French ſtage, in which ſo many men of extraordinary abilities greatly diſtinguiſhed themſelves; I have done this to prove, upon a comparative review, the ſuperiority of our theatre at home.

If I held up ÆSCHYLUS, LIVIUS ANDRONICUS, and CORNEILLE, it was to place SHAKESPEAR upon higher ground; if I inſtanced ROSCIUS and BARON, it was to ſhew the pre-eminence of GARRICK; and this motive has been my guide in every inſtance; nor have I ſhrunk from the beſt commendation I could procure for authors, actors, muſicians, or any other of thoſe deſcriptions of enterprizers, who in ſo many ways are neceſſary to promote the ſucceſs of a theatre, becauſe I fear not to enter the liſts with them all, clad as I am in Engliſh armour.

But though I intend to diſpute the ſubject point

by point, I do not mean to pay my country ſo ill a compliment as to contend for ſuperiority in thoſe ſubordinate requiſites which are the mere trappings, the ſumpter horſes of the drama. While theſe are decorous and keep their ſtation in the back ground, let them relieve, which they will meritoriouſly, the nobler attractions of the ſtage: ſpeaking the propriety of its conductors, and the good ſenſe of the audience. But when the pageant becomes the object inſtead of the hero, I call it no longer the triumphal entry of ALEXANDER but of his elephants. Let the ſtage have dances; let it have ſcenery; let it have ſpectacles; but never let theſe trench upon the rational pleaſure and the ſolid inſtruction conveyed by tragedies and comedies. In the firſt let the French excel, be the other the province of the Engliſh *.

Upon this ground I ſtart; and, ſince it has been aſſerted with great confidence by the writers of other countries, that the dramatic art arrived to no per-

* A French dancer, in the reign of Queen ANNE, after he had returned to FRANCE pretty well loaded with the ſpoils of this country, heard a great deal from report of HARLEY, the famous Earl of OXFORD, and of his being in great favour with the Queen. "Well now upon my ſoul," ſaid he, "I am aſtoniſhed at it. I "found him the ſtupideſt fellow I ever met with; why, Sir, I had "him ten years under my hands and never could teach him a "ſingle caper."

fection in ENGLAND till it had been perfected by all its neighbours, and ſince our own writers have very tamely acquieſced in this calumny, I ſhall, for the firſt attempt of this kind, begin my taſk by endeavouring to reſcue the Engliſh ſtage from ſo much obliquy, and ſhew that we are in every thing antecedent to the French, and, perhaps, every other people but the Spaniards; and that there are veſtiges of the dramatic art traceable in this country long before the fall of the Roman empire *.

* As the authorities from which I ſhall collect the leading features of this work will, of courſe, be very numerous, I ſhall, for many reaſons, beg to decline perpetually citing them. They will naturally contain a thouſand contradictions, and my buſineſs will be, while I diveſt myſelf of the prejudices which influenced thoſe authors as they wrote, to form the faireſt and moſt rational concluſions that can be deduced from their arguments. Were I to adopt any other conduct, the names of STOWE, SPEED, MALMESBURY, BEDE, PERCY, PARIS, and I am ſure at leaſt fifty others, foreign and Engliſh, would be for ever occurring, and the work thus ſtuffed with authorities would wear the appearance of a ſtring of marginal notes, or a column in Doctor JOHNSON's dictionary. The reader, however, ſees that it may be neceſſary, for the ſake of elucidation, ſometimes to adopt a contrary conduct.

CHAP. II.

CONJECTURES CONCERNING THE DRAMATIC ART IN BRITON BEFORE THE ROMAN CONQUEST.

WITHOUT examining whether this iſland ever was a part of the Continent, or by what other means it became peopled, it is impoſſible not to concur in a belief that the Britons were originally Gauls. But, if it be allowed only that they had a free communication and intercourſe with the Gauls, it is abundantly enough to eſtabliſh a proof that they imported their amuſements as well as their merchandize; and, if the Gauls, who were clearly a motley people collected from all nations, adopted the manners, ſtudies, and pleaſures of the Egyptians, the Grecks, and the Romans, how is it poſſible that the Britons could avoid imbibing the ſame propenſities?

It is not pretended that the Druids were originally Britiſh; on the contrary they are conſidered as an itinerant body who inſinuated themſelves among the Gauls, the Germans, and the Britons, and who, pro-

bably, came originally from Assyria and Egypt, into ſuch countries as would harbour them; and, as they have been conſidered in this part of the world in the ſame light with the Gymnoſophiſts among the Indians, the Magi among the Perſians, the Chaldeans among the Assyrians, and the Philoſophers among the Greeks, it is very unlikely that the inſtruction they came to impart was ſo auſtere as entirely to preclude amuſement.

Indeed that this was one part of their miſſion there cannot be a doubt. They conſiſted of four claſſes; prieſts, augurs, inſtructors of youth, and poets. Here we have clearly the bards, who ſung to their harps the acts and atchievements of heroes, and whether it was among the Britons they firſt eſtabliſhed this art, or brought it ſooneſt to perfection, it muſt certainly have been in high eſteem, for the word bard, if we may rely on a number of authorities, is purely Britiſh and derived from bardus, which ſignifies a ſinger.

We have hiſtories of the Welch bards, and the Iriſh bards; and if there were only, by way of authority, that aſtoniſhing ſpecimen of uncultivated genius the poems of Ossian, written in the ſecond or third century, who can deny, the eminent poetic talents of the Scotch bards; and, upon a conſideration of this,

how naturally will the names of HOMER and HESIOD occur to the mind, ſince the Celtic hiſtory as well as the Grecian had its foundation in poetry.

But to put it another way. The Druids either travelled for knowledge, or it was brought home to them from its parent countries; and, when ſo acquired, it was incorporated among the purſuits and improvements of the hardy Britons. They knew geography, which not only comprehends a meaſurement of the globe itſelf, but every one of its component parts; which originated in CHALDEA, paſſed into EGYPT, improved in PHŒNECIA, and grew celebrated in GREECE *. They practiſed aſtrology, an art characteriſtically Egyptian; the pupils of which art have infeſted the world. Had the Greeks or the Romans hardly a ſingle camp where the aſtrologers and the ſoothſayers did not act their parts as naturally as the buffoons and the muſicians? Geometry, which again took root in EGYPT, and afterwards paſſed into GREECE was another of their ſtudies; and to theſe we are authorized to add theology †, aſtronomy, natural philoſophy, and politics.

* SOCRATES, to humble ALCIBIADES, aſked him to trace his territories in ATHENS upon a map.

† The theology of the Druids was that the ſoul does not die but

Are theſe the probable ſtudies of an auſtere people ſhut up in an obſcure nook at a part of the world far diſtant from that where theſe ſciences originated? What uſe was the doctrine of ſurveying coaſts and harbours, dividing and ſubdividing the world, or the art of prophecying the fall and riſe of empires, or the principles and elements of extenſion, to men who limited their purſuits to the little iſland of MONA? No. It will not bear any other conſtruction than that the druids, originally wanderers, after combating ſchiſms in their native countries, ſet up their reſt among other nations, more likely to tolerate their opinions, and venerate their doctrines.

No part of their character, however, concerns the ſubject on which our attention is employed, except as it relates to their having been denominated bards, but in that capacity it is as fair to conſider their hymns in their ſacrifices to JUPITER and MERCURY as perfectly dramatic as the hymns of the ancient Greeks in praiſe of BACCHUS, or the Egyptians in honour of ISIS and OSIRIS.

If it be now allowed me that the Druids came

---

paſſes from one to another. To this, and their natural philoſophy, LUCAN finely alludes, and accounts for their contempt of death in their belief of immortality, which, by the way, he calls an error.

originally from EGYPT my remark is ſo came muſic; ſo came all thoſe arts which have enlighted the world. Drawings, gems, coins, monuments, columns, pyramids retain the forms of inſtruments invented by the Egyptians; the properties and effects of which, with very little variation, are the ſame as many of thoſe now in uſe among Europeans *.

---

* Forgetting this I ſuppoſe, an author, full of ingenuity and intelligence, aſks what is become of the muſic of the ancients and why it is not as manifeſt to us as their pyramids, their ſtatues, and their writings. Unfortunately muſic is not a dead language; letters are one thing; notation is another. Poems and chronicles, relative to the actions of heroes and legiſlators, are intereſting and beget emulation; ſenſations that relate to ideas may be faithfully tranſmitted from language to language by fixed rules and principles; but which way are ſenſations to be tranſmitted to which no fixed rules can be annexed? Delight undefined, and rapture inexplicable. It can never be forgotten that thoſe great writers, whoſe works are ſuppoſed to be authenticated to a letter, are perpetually ſpeaking of this very muſic and all its facination. But the glory was to be reſerved for a monk and that celeſtial art which was created with order and coeval with light, inſtead of inſtantly diffuſing univerſal pleaſure and gladening the ſmiling world, was doomed to remain a chaos, an imperfect lump, for ſo many thouſands of years, to be awakened into exiſtence and ſhaped into ſymetry by a droniſh prieſt in a ſolitary cloiſter. Many obvious circumſtances purely adventitious which have been inſtanced by a variety of authors, will, I am afraid, ſtigmatize this friar, this father GUIDO, rather as a MARSYAS than crown him as an APOLLO. Put melody out of the queſtion, nature gives us harmony; witneſs the bantum cock that in crowing falls a perfect fifth; the hen that in cackling riſes a complete ſixth; the cuckoo that with the aſſiſtance of the baſs, which the ear is compelled to ſuppoſed, makes

Hiſtory, both ſacred and profane, is full of accounts in which muſicians led on troops and animated them to victory; and ſcarcely do we find any of theſe in which the ancient Gallic, German, and Britiſh Druids are not mentioned; who are ſaid to have been not only prieſts but muſicians, a part of whoſe profeſſion it was to animate their countrymen to the fight. How far back this obtained, or to what degree of perfection it arrived, it is not poſſible, or if it were, is it material to trace. Certainly theſe cuſtoms exiſted before the Chriſtian æra. The Druids had ſchools where bodies of ſtudents aſſembled. In theſe ſchools young men were brought up to learn arts and languages, and, particularly, Greek; and it is remarked that they learnt a great number of verſes by heart. By whom written? Certainly by HOMER, HESIOD, ÆSCHY-

---

an exact common chord. But how this is extended when we conſider the properties of foreign birds! Did not the parrot, the minor, and the mocking bird whiſtle till father GUIDO, like another ADAM, gave them permiſſion? But, after all, what ſhall be ſaid of the ſloth? that, wonderful to relate, to thoſe who have not attended to nature, begins at a key note, repeats regularly every note afterwards in a major key till he includes the ſixth, and then ſinks gradually to the key note again, going over the very leſſon of Sol fa, in the wilds of AMERICA, that muſical friars, and other modern harmoniſts, teach to young ladies, and other novices, in the courts and cities of EUROPE. Oh that Friar GUIDO ſhould allow to the ſloth that which he refuſes to the ancients!

LUS, SOPHOCLES, and EURIPIDES. What then did they learn? Dramatic poems; plays, even from HOMER; for I will not concede that the *Iliad* and the *Odyſſey* are any other than dramatic poems in narrative.

This whole fabric then muſt fall to the ground, or it muſt be allowed that the Druids knew the dramatic art, or at leaſt were in poſſeſſion of the productions of thoſe who did know it, in as high perfection as any thing it had attained before SHAKESPEAR. How far they exerciſed it is certainly left to conjecture. Revolutions annihilate cuſtoms and obliterate their records. Were it not for the Scriptures, a knowledge of the early arts and improvements of the Hebrews would probably have been loſt when they were led captives to BABYLON *; and, had not the Grecian arms carried the Grecian arts to the remoteſt corners of the earth, the name of that great empire would have been extinguiſhed with the empire itſelf. SPAIN, therefore, when it was overrun with the Goths, and BRITAIN, when it was invaded by the Romans, having been merely imitators of other nations, loſt all the veſtiges of thoſe arts they had learnt in the ſudden wreck of their general fortune.

* What can give ſo complete an idea of an Oratorio, certainly a dramatic entertainment, as the Lamentations of the Children of ISRAEL upon the Banks of the EUPHRATES.

Having taken bold ground, I ſhall I hope be pardoned if I go a little farther in ſearch of probable argument to bear out, not what I have advanced, but what I have ſubmitted. BRITAIN, before the invaſion of JULIUS CÆSAR, was divided into twenty-ſeven ſites or countries, each governed by a king or a queen, among whom were found at that time many famous for arts and arms. Can it be credited that the quarrels, the valour, the gallantry, the intercourſe, the intermarriages of this ariſtocracy could poſſibly have taken place without poetical celebration.

It is infallible that they had the means of celebrating ſacrifices *, victories, and other ceremonies and feſtivals; and, therefore, they did celebrate them; probably in the manner of the provincial poets afterwards in FRANCE; and it is feaſible that their dramatic repreſentations, if there were any, not being yet tainted with the licentiouſneſs of the Romans, were modelled by the purity of the Greeks; ſince they knew Greek long before they

* We are told that the Britons had more gods than the Egyptians, therefore their ſuperſtition was greater. They ſacrificed beaſts, and ſometimes men; and are ſaid to have augured from circumſtances and ſymptoms ſo wonderfully that PLINY tells us the Britons were held in ſuch eſtimation for aſtrology, it ſeemed as if the Perſians learnt magic from them, not they from the Perſians. They determined all controverſies, and ſung the deeds of heroes.

knew Latin *. Theſe are conjectures, however, not aſſertions; probabilities, not certainties; but ſince it is difficult to prevent the mind from leaning towards a belief of their ſpirit, if not their letter. they will not by the candid reader be conſidered here as an intruſion.

---

* Many authors are of opinion that the Greeks landed often in BRITAIN, and particularly in the North. PLINY ſpeaks of BRITAIN as an iſland frequently in the monuments and the records of both the Greeks and the Romans. THULE, certainly an iſland in SCOTLAND among the ORCADES, the diſtance of which iſland from BRITAIN PYTHEAS deſcribes, was much mentioned and renowned among Greek writers; and we are told, by ATHENEUS, that PHILEAS TAUROMINITES was in BRITAIN, according to the date, about one hundred and ſixty years before the coming of JULIUS CÆSAR; and this account ſpeaks of it as a recent thing, for it was about a hundred and ſeventy-nine years before the Chriſtian æra that ATHENEUS was a writer. Many other proofs might be adduced; and, in particular, from SOLINUS, who ſpeaks of an altar in CALADONIA on which was to be ſeen an inſcription to ULYSSES in Greek letters. Veſtiges of Drudical temples having alſo been found in the Scotch iſlands; the well known propenſities of the Scotch to conform to their ancient rites, manners and paſtimes; the productions of their early bards, ſome of which that are truly epic, and others that are written in dialogue, and, therefore, actually dramatic, leave very little doubt but that from the epic and dramatic poetry of GREECE the Scotch bards derived much of their excellence.

CHAP. III.

FROM THE INVASION OF THE ROMANS TO THE SAXON HEPTARCHY.

At the time of the Roman invaſion we begin to be more decided. Cæsar, who was himſelf a playwright, hardly invaded Britain without his mimes. His ambition was as much to be conſidered in quality of author as conqueror, and we have ſeen him permit Accius to treat him with indifference that he might the eaſier obtain a place in a literary aſſembly. Nor was this derogatory even to Cæsar. The world at this moment contemplate his writings with more pleaſure than his conqueſts, though his clemency was equal to his courage.

From the inſtant the Britons had an intercourſe with the Romans, they imitated them in every thing. The perpetual diſputes concerning their tributes during the reigns of Cæsar and Augustus, occaſioned viſits to Rome, where the ſons of the beſt families vied with each other in Roman accompliſhments. With theſe they returned and became ob-

jects of imitation to their countrymen; and, though the Druids ſtrenuouſly interfered, the poiſon was imbibed, and licentiouſneſs ſoon took place of ſimplicity and hardihood.

The very mention of the Auguſtan age ſuggeſts an idea of amuſements, and particularly of theatrical amuſements, which that emperor ſo largely encouraged. Strangers flocked to ROME to ſee thoſe ſtupendous theatres, already deſcribed, and to witneſs the exhibitions given in them. Britons followed the examples of others; and, though in their continual ſtruggles with the Romans they ſcarcely ſecured themſelves a home and a reſidence, yet they beguiled their misfortunes naturally enough with the ſports and relaxations of their neighbours, and for the performance of theſe they are actually ſaid by SPEED to have had a theatre.

During the reign of TIBERIUS, at which time they enjoyed more quiet, civilization gained ground; they permitted commercial intercourſe to every part of the iſland, and they imitated the manners of the Romans as faithfully and as ſervilely as we have ſeen the Romans imitate the manners of the Greeks.

In theſe times reigned CARACTACUS, the war-

like king of the SILURES, GALGACUS, the worthy king of CALEDONIA, and PRASUTAGUS, king of ICENE, over which province his wife, the famous and unfortunate BOADICEA, afterwards became queen. Theſe and their adherents were now among the few who reſiſted the licentiouſneſs of the Romans, and propped the declining reputation of the Druids*; but the hardy and warlike ſpirit of the Britons was no more. The ſtruggle was in vain. The rapacity, the inſolence, and the corruption of the Romans had too much vitiated the manners of

* The reputation of the Druids began to decline from another circumſtance. Our SAVIOUR, who was born in the reign of AUGUSTUS, was crucified about four years before the death of TIBERIUS. When the diſciples diſperſed at the time the Jews were baniſhed from ROME, we are told that both St. PETER and St. PAUL came and preached the Goſpel in BRITAIN; which, as far as it relates to St. PAUL, is confirmed by ſo many authors that it can ſcarcely be doubted. We have a very particular account of CLAUDIA RUFINA, a Britiſh lady, who was married to RUFUS, a ſenator of ROME. This lady was celebrated, particularly by MARTIAL the poet, for correctly underſtanding the Greek and Latin languages. He ſays in one of his poems that ſhe might have paſſed at ATHENS for a Greek, and at ROME for a Roman. But I particularly mention her here becauſe ſhe gave an aſylum to St. PETER and St. PAUL at the time of their proſcription, and it is ſaid that ſhe was the ſpecial cauſe of St. PAUL's miſſion to BRITAIN; by whom, as ſhe knew the avidity of the Britons for Roman poetry, ſhe ſent the verſes of MARTIAL; in conſequence of which he ſays, in another poem, that "the Britons begin to learn the verſes of the Romans"; a ſtrong corroboration of many things already here advanced.

the inexperienced Britons. CARACTACUS, betrayed by CARTISMANDUA, the luſtful wife of VINUTIUS, king of the BRAGRANTES, was led a captive to ROME to grace the triumph of CLAUDIUS; BOADICEA, in the reign of NERO, after ſuſtaining with her daughters every poſſible indignity and diſgrace, loſt a battle, in which fell eighty thouſand of her adherents, on which ſhe poiſoned herſelf*; and the Druids, who had wholly retired to their iſland of MONA, were ſurrounded and exterminated.

---

* This very occaſion affords abundant proof that the Britons not only knew the Roman refinements but practiſed them in the fulleſt extent. After the injuries that the houſe and followers of PRASUTAGUS had ſuſtained from the Romans, they are ſaid to have been inſpired from Heaven with hope; for that the image of Victory, at CAMULODUNEM, fell down reverſed without any apparent cauſe. That women ran diſtracted into the ſtreets and prophecied deſtruction. "Strange noiſes were heard in the court," ſays my author, "and "howlings in the *theater*." This is the Engliſh orthography; the word ſpelled *theatre* being French, but they both mean the ſame thing; and all thoſe figurative acceptations of the word, ſuch as theatre of the world, theatre of war, and others, are nothing more than what time and uſage have annexed to it; for never among the Greeks, the Romans, or any other nation, at leaſt that I can trace, was it uſed to expreſs any thing but a place for the repreſentation of dramatic entertainments. SHAKESPEAR calls the world a wide and univerſal theatre; but he, who well knew a figure, could not be perfect without all its limbs, proves his poſition by adding that all the men and women are merely players. But to corroborate this, BOADICEA, in her famous ſpeech at the head of her troops calls NERO, in deriſion, a fidler, and a ſtage player; which we knew he was.

If the Britons had any amuſements that bore a likeneſs to the drama before the Roman invaſion, that circumſtance completely overturned them by adding amuſements of a different complexion, which again were prevented from gaining ground from the perpetual wars in which they firſt loſt their dignity as a nation, and afterwards degenerated into poverty and misfortune; for the Romans having once made a complete conqueſt of the iſland,

---

Nay, ſhe attributes the diſſentions, then in BRITAIN, to their licentious imitation of the Romans diſſeminated by the jeſters and buffoons, whom ſhe calls ROME's inſtruments, "and BRITAIN's vipers. But for theſe," ſays ſhe, "TIBERIUS, though extremely covetous, "would have foregone his tribute; CLAUDIUS would have been "glad to have made peace; and NERO would ſtill have followed "his fiddling trade at home had not the diſcords of BRITAIN been "cauſed by his fiddlers here." But, indeed, the whole of this ſpeech is not only full of eloquence but erudition, and plainly ſhews the knowledge and information of thoſe Druids from whom ſhe boaſted her education. How noble, yet how feminine in her quoting the examples of SYMIRAMIS, of ASSYRIA, NITOCRIS, of BABYLON, TOMYRIS, of SCYTHIA, and CLEOPATRA, of EGYPT, as proofs that it may be neceſſary for women to command armies; but what does this prove in her? That ſhe, Briton as ſhe was, at that early period had ſtored her mind with learning: nay more, that theſe matters were underſtood by thoſe to whom ſhe addreſſed them, otherwiſe her eloquence would have been uſeleſs, and her time thrown away. But this is corroborated in an hundred inſtances, one of which is the conduct of CARACTACUS, who, though king of a remote people trained only to arms, aſtoniſhed the Romans, when he was carried captive to ROME, as much by his eloquence as by his fortitude.

they so neglected the means of its internal defence, that after the death of AGRICOLA, it became an easy conquest to the Picts and Scots, who were, at length, routed by VORTIGERN, when he called in the assistance of the Saxons who conquered BRITAIN, after it had been five hundred and twenty eight years governed by the Romans, and twenty-eight years after that in a state of complete anarchy.

CHAP. IV.

FROM THE SAXON HEPTARCHY TO THE NORMAN CONQUEST.

Amidst frequent gleams of certain light, we muſt ſtill wander in the gloom of conjecture; yet, if our enquiries are no more than ingenious, they may entertain, even though they ſhould not convince; and it may be worth while to cheriſh probability on a theme in which we intereſt ourſelves, rather than let the whole ſink to oblivion and ſo withhold a clue from other enquirers, who by being better informed may be more ſucceſsful.

The queſtion is whether or not it be of any moment to know if the dramatic art exiſted at all in this country prior to the ſixteenth century, before which time it certainly attained no conſiderable degree of celebrity; but we are upon a ſubject in its nature calculated to excite curioſity, and, I fear, if authors were precluded from exerciſing a little conjectural ſpeculation, ancient hiſtory of every ſort would be involved in a very inconvenient predicament; its

whole foundation, ſandy as it is, being no more than tradition.

From my own part I am willing to believe, and I think this inclination rational enough, that the only reaſon amuſements and their nature have never been faithfully recorded in this country is becauſe no actual government began to be ſettled here till ALFRED; and that even his laws and regulations were not permanently carried into effect till king JOHN. The hiſtory of this kingdom before the conqueſts conſiſts of nothing more than a ſeries of conflicting ſtruggles for power and authority, in the commemorating of which the hiſtorian naturally finds himſelf ſo involved and perplexed, that, had he the pen of HOMER, he could not give it ingenuity enough to deſcribe differently the various battles he has to deplore, much leſs the different heroes who fell in thoſe battles; and, admitting this, what accurate account can we expect of the ſubjects of their relaxations whoſe occupations were reſtleſs ambition and deſtructive glory.

Amuſements, nevertheleſs, they muſt have had; it would be childi to deny it; and it is clearly within probability that, previous to the Roman conqueſt, theſe amuſements conſiſted of ſuch poetry and muſic as they imbibed from the Greeks, as it

is evident that after the arrival of JULIUS CÆSAR they partook of the dramatic and other ſports and ſpectacles of the Romans.

After theſe wanton plunderers had ſubdued this country, deſpoiled it, defaced it, and left no veſtiges of their inſatiable luſt of power but the miſeries cauſed by its ravages; they baſely forſook its defenceleſs inhabitants, now enervated by oppreſſion, as a prey to the firſt band of inſurgents that might think proper to invade them. The land became a ſcene of blood-ſhed and confuſion; till, after a variety of ſanguinary conflicts, it began to lift up its head and flatter itſelf with protection under the Saxon heptarchy.

During all this while, however, neither poetry nor its attendant muſic ſlept. The only difference was that groves and receſſes witneſſed thoſe numbers, and thoſe ſtrains, in terms and ſounds of complaint and lamentation, which before, in ſprightly and triumphant meaſure, had delighted courts and animated armies. Its fire was ſmouldering among the embers, but not extinct. A remnant of the luckleſs Druids ſtill were ſcattered up and down, particularly in CALEDONIA. Theſe required neither records for their poetry nor notation for their muſic. Tradition ſupplied the matter and memory gave it utterance.

Theſe, as the times became leſs furious, gradually emancipated from their hiding places; and as it had been long cuſtomary for every chief to have his bard, for what would have been ACHILLES without HOMER, the Saxon kings, in the midſt of their reſtleſs contentions, by which they at length became united, glad enough to lean to whatever might ſoften the horrors of war and introduce, even in the rudeſt ſtate, ſomething like civilization, encouraged theſe bards to ſing thoſe exploits they had atchieved, or to invent for them attributable atchievements to make them reſpected in the eyes of their dependants, or elſe to ſtimulate them to great actions, and their dependants to an admiration of them, by the ſtories of kings and heroes which for ages had been handed down by tradition.

Nor were VORTIGERN, and thoſe other Britons who after inviting the Saxons became their opponents, more averſe to liſten to the poetry of the bard or the muſic of the harp. The carouſels and all the barbarous ſports which made up the *cours plenieres* of the French, immediately after the extinction of the Roman empire, no doubt pervaded BRITAIN; and the Round Table, and the Tournaments in the court of ARTHUR, which were exactly the French entremets, give inconteſtible proofs of this.

The atcheivements of ARTHUR were ſung by the bards, of whom MERLIN is ſaid to have been the chief;* and, if we go forward and come to

* Theſe ſongs were regularly handed down by the bards to one another. It is not queſtionable with me whether, in ſome of the old ballads in honour of the court of king ARTHUR, we may not have the matter, if not in ſome degree the very expreſſions, that were uttered in the preſence of that Prince. All the authors, who write moderately, ſpeaking of ARTHUR, give fairly to his fame every traceable part of his proweſs that can be reconciled to reaſon, but believe not "the ſcandalous fables, poetical fictions, and hyperbolical falſe-"hoods," attributed to him by fanciful writers. In the ſame manner all reaſonable men, though they cannot conſent to the fables of HOMER, nor to the inventions of SOPHOCLES and EURIPIDES concerning the battle of TROY, do not deny that there were battles at TROY, and that there were many valiant atchievements performed there. It has ever been the cuſtom of bards to call in invention whenever the recital of a ſimple ſtory was not ſufficiently poetical, and, therefore, though we cannot credit all that the Welch bards, who were accuſtomed to ſing to their harps at feaſts the noble deeds of their anceſtors, have ſaid of ARTHUR; yet, omitting all they have aſcribed to his conduct, attributable to ſupernatural agency, we cannot deny the ſubſtance of their ſong in which they allow his exiſtence and great proweſs. I ſhall relate a remarkable though a well known proof that all the ſongs of theſe bards were not merely legendary. The burial place of ARTHUR had been for ſix hundred years unknown. When HENRY the ſecond, and the firſt PLANTAGENET, towards the end of his reign, was at PEMBROKE, he was entertained by ſome Welch bards who ſung the deeds of ARTHUR. In their ſongs were ſome obſcure expreſſions that related to his burial, which, upon putting circumſtances together, convinced the king and his courtiers, for it mentioned a church-yard in which two pyramids were ſtanding, that it muſt ſurely be at GLASTONBURY, in SOMERSETSHIRE. Here they reſolved to ſearch; and, having

ALFRED, we ſhall not only find him an excellent poet but an accompliſhed muſician; and what wonder in a prince of his rare talents, who had been bred up at the court of ROME at a time when ITALY grew celebrated for poetry and muſic; more than a hundred years after CHARLEMAGNE had gleaned in that country the materials to found an academy in his own, and only a hundred and about fifteen years before that very GUIDO ARETINE, who is falſely ſaid to have invented muſic, though it muſt be truly acknowledged that he was of very conſiderable advantage to it as far as relates to meaſure and regularity.

But what need to go ſo forward as ALFRED, or even ARTHUR, to ſhew when poetry and muſic were known in BRITAIN? Did not another Prince ſo early as the third century, ſing the wars of the Scotch and the Iriſh with all the beauty and majeſty of HOMER? Where can you find among the Greeks

---

cauſed the ground to be dug up they found at the depth of ſeven feet a ſtone with an inſcription which convinced them their ſearch would not be in vain. They perſevered and found ARTHUR and his queen, both of whom were afterwards entombed in GLASTONBURY church, and a croſs of lead, as it was taken off the ſtone with the inſcription, was to be ſeen in the Regiſtry of that church till the ſuppreſſion of that and many other religious places in the reign of HENRY the eighth.

more picture, more dignity, more pathos, than in the writings of OSSIAN, the ſon of FINGAL? Are not thoſe poems full of matter that relate to times long before they were written? And are they not replete with that Grecian ſweetneſs and ſublimity ſo well known to the Druids, and ſo well imparted in the education of their Princes? Nay, are they not full of thoſe greciſms with which the Druids improved the Celtic tongue; and, finally, are not many of them written in dialogue, and, therefore, perfectly dramatic.

As to ARTHUR, the Knights Companions of the Round Table were warriors and poets; ſo were thoſe of RAIMOND BERENGER, in PROVENCE, to whom they have been often compared; and, ſo completely has it been ſettled that the amuſements in BRITAIN and thoſe in PROVENCE were exactly the ſame, that the only diſpute, a matter of no moment to us, has been which has boaſted the pre-eminence; in point of time certainly thoſe in BRITAIN, for ARTHUR lived ſeven hundred years before BERENGER. I do not effect to deny that the accounts of the provincial poets are full of contradiction and liable to particular objection, but this is rather an eſtabliſhment of the general fact; for, as we know of the dramatic entertainments of GREECE and ROME, and above all that ROME ſwarmed with

mimes and actors of moſt extraordinary merit at the time of the diſſolution of the empire, it is impoſſible but that they ſpread themſelves wherever they could find an aſylum, and that, having an immediate intercouſe with ENGLAND they viſited us as well as their neighbours.

From ARTHUR to ALFRED, by which time upwards of three hundred years had elapſed, and the different kingdoms of the Saxon heptarchy were conſolidated into one ſtate, amuſements, except ſuch as ſtimulated heroes to great actions, of courſe waited on occaſion, and could not be encouraged; but, during thoſe intervals when peace gave pauſe to the tuba recta* and the tympanum, and welcomed the harp and the ribible, during theſe occaſions, we hear variouſly of the progreſs of muſic which was, according to circumſtances, ſilenced for a time in different counties.

St. AUSTIN, who it has been ſaid brought choral

* It is curious enough to remark that the tuba recta, a kind of double trumpet, is without heſitation ſaid to be the two trumpets of ſilver which MOSES was commanded to make in the Wilderneſs. It was certainly very ancient and retained its original form in the ſixteenth century. In a picture at WINDSOR, repreſenting an interview between ARDRES and GUISNES, are trumpets exactly like the tuba recta.

muſic into ENGLAND, certainly to make his miſſion more welcome, the purport of which was to convert the Saxons to Chriſtianity, brought with him forty Monks, the greateſt part of whom were ſingers; and, ſo well did Pope GREGORY know that this was the beſt medium through which he could effect his purpoſe, that a ſucceſſion of ſingers came over, among whom was one of the moſt celebrated in ITALY *.

All this will abundantly prove, for it is ſeriouſly wrong to inſtance too much extraneous matter, that ALFRED opened his eyes in a country where muſic was well known and generally practiſed, and with this pleaſant circumſtance he ſeems to have been particularly delighted; for, when he was ſent very young to the court of ROME, he omitted no op-

* We find that the Engliſh ITALY, in the ſeventh century, was the county of KENT. The clergy made muſic their ſtudy, and diſſeminated the knowledge of it among the laity. We have the authorities of HOLLINSHED and BEDE, that they ſung in the churches the Gregorian chant which we have been told by VOLTAIRE was not improved upon in FRANCE till LULLY. The LULLY of KENT at that time was one PUTTA, who was ſo little an ORPHEUS to ETHELRED, king of the Mercians, when he invaded KENT, that he was obliged to obtain a privilege from the biſhop of MERCIA to go about and teach muſic to ſuch as would learn it, and get companions to entertain the great for hire. Here we have fairly the troubadours in ENGLAND, and in the ſeventh century too.

portunity of improving himſelf in more arts than the art of reigning, among which poetry and muſic ſeem to have been his favourites; and, though his literary productions conſiſt of many volumes, yet muſic was certainly his darling ſtudy. BALE, SPELMAN, and others, tell us that he moſt induſtriouſly encouraged muſic throughout the kingdom; that he invited muſicians into the country, and particularly one GRIMBALD, of whom the French writers have ſpoken very warmly. This muſician had been uſeful to ALFRED in his way to ROME, and he was treated very honourably at the court of that monarch whoſe entertainments he regulated.

It cannot now be denied that ſome of thoſe amuſements muſt have been dramatic, at leaſt as much as any of the maſques and interludes which were written by BEN JONSON, and performed in the court of queen ELIZABETH; for, if they were merely choral what had the harp to do with them? And how could they be any other than works of fancy and variety when the king himſelf was the beſt harper in the band, as it evidently turned out afterwards when he aſſumed the form of a common minſtrel in the Daniſh camp, where he muſt have conformed himſelf to the perſonating every kind of character to avoid detection, ſince he remained many days and was obliged to conciliate favour from

the loweſt to the higheſt, in the character of a vagabond and a hireling.

From the moment ALFRED ſat down in profound peace and perfect ſecurity, he with the moſt indefatigable induſtry began to extend civizilation, and to make his name as famous for arts as it had been for arms. He found his ſubjects, in conſequence of ſuch a ſucceſſion of ſtruggles, ſunk into the groſſeſt ignorance and barbariſm. He, therefore, as we have ſeen, invited celebrated ſcholars from all parts of EUROPE, and became himſelf the ſtimulus for their education. He was a very voluminous author, and he founded the Univerſity of OXFORD, or at leaſt reſtored it, where every literary and muſical ſtudy were encouraged. The arts flouriſhed under him. He became their natural and acknowledged patron. The trees and ſtones followed him like another ORPHEUS; and, as AUGUSTUS ſaid he found ROME brick and left it marble, ſo ALFRED might have ſaid he found ENGLAND timber and left it brick and ſtone; which for the country and the time was a proportionable improvement. Not only the neceſſaries but the luxuries of life were now enjoyed by the Britons, for which, voyages were made even to the MEDITERANIAN, and other ports; but nothing ſatisfied him ſo much as the cultivation of the politer arts. A writer ſays,

whom ALFRED well knew and encouraged, that "a great city ſhould not only be commodious and "ſerious, but alſo merry and ſportful*;" and this is afterwards quoted by FITZSTEPHEN after the Roman conqueſt when he ſpeaks of the drama at that time.

ALFRED tranſlated from the Greek and thus knew SOPHOCLES and EURIPIDES, ARISTOPHANES and MENANDER †, and, therefore, with his accompliſhed knowledge muſt have been a correct dramatic critic. As this is true, and as all authors have been laviſh in the praiſe of his own poetry and muſic, and, indeed, whenever a prince has been held up as an example for the world's imitation ALFRED has been the darling theme, it cannot be queſtioned that he made it his ſtudy to procure inoffenſive

* In one of his acts there are theſe words: "We will and com-"mand that all freemen of our kingdom, poſſeſſing two hides of "land, ſhall bring up their ſons in learning till they be fifteen years "of age; at leaſt ſo that they may be trained to know GOD, to be "men of underſtanding, and to live happily; for of a man that is "born free and yet illiterate, we repute no otherwiſe than of a beaſt, "a brainleſs body, and a very ſot."

† ALFRED delighted in tranſlating fables, particularly thoſe of ÆSOP, that inſtruction might be conveyed through the medium of allegory. Is it poſſible the drama could eſcape this great judge of the human mind as a vehicle for teaching ſocial duty.

amuſements for the leiſure hours of his people, that ſo their minds might more willingly embrace ſuch uſeful purſuits as in following the example of their king, might worthily ſecure that peace and happineſs which, not more the greatneſs than the cultivation of his mind, had, after ſo many ſevere conflicts and fluctuating viciſſitudes, ſo nobly eſtabliſhed *.

---

* I cannot here reſiſt my inclination to offer an obvious remark which by the writers of all countries has been overlooked whenever they have ſupported the cauſe of the drama. In ENGLAND it may have proceeded from indifference, which, however, I ſhall not caval at; for it is at laſt for the public to judge how far the antiquity of the theatre is an object worthy of conſideration. My remarks may be thought futile, and thoſe reſearches which I may fancy meritorious may be conſidered as impertinent and irrelevant. I am in for it, however, and hope to be pardoned if I endeavour to clinch every nail I can. The obſervation I allude to is, that nobody ſince HESIOD has refuſed unequivocally to accord the province of tragedy to MELPOMENE, and of comedy to THALIA. The Muſes were fabulous divinities of the heathens, who certainly knew nothing more of them than their ſtatues created by fancy. Of theſe originally there were but three. Theſe preſided over meditation, memory, and ſinging, which laſt taken in its extended ſenſe means recording. At length a ſculptor, pleaſed like PROMETHEUS with his employment, made nine ſtatues inſtead of three, and they were all placed in the Temple of APOLLO. HESIOD gave to them their names and their attributes, on which account, probably, it is ſaid he was perſonally acquainted with the Muſes. This was about three thouſand years ago; the fact has never been diſputed; and, however, there may have been trifling variations from it, however the provinces of CALLIOPE, CLIO, and URANIA may have been ex-

After the death of ALFRED, the liberal arts, and of courſe the ſtage, very ſoon received a violent check, and thoſe improvements, which had been made in every branch of ſtudy during the laſt three years, the only period in the reign of ALFRED that

---

changed or blended together by literary cavil, however POLYHYMNIA may have been ſometimes the muſe of muſic, ſometimes of dance, and ſometimes of rhetoric, however TERPSICHORE may, according to ſome, have preſided over the harp, and to others over dancing, or, in ſhort, however different authors may have wreſted authorities to their own purpoſes by changing the attributes of thoſe muſes it was their ambition to invoke, no one attempt has been made to deprive MELPOMENE and THALIA of the ſole and excluſive poſſeſſion reſpectively of tragedy and comedy. This admitted muſt it not have been familiar to every writer ſince HESIOD what the dramatic art actually is and was? Nay, before HESIOD; for how could he have given them ſupremacy over an art that was not in exiſtence? We cannot reject this unleſs we reject the ancients altogether; and, if we permit their heroes to have invoked MARS and BELLONA, that great actions might be atchieved we muſt permit their poets to have invoked the muſes that great actions might be recorded; and, as this has never been ſo effectually done as through the medium of the theatre, can any writer, ancient or modern, have been ignorant of all the requiſites of an art ſo known, ſo acknowledged, and ſo defined. ALFRED knew this art. He knew the truth of every word here written. Will it then be eaſily credited that he did not encourage that remembrancer of fame to which ſo many heroes had been indebted for the perpetuation of their glory? It cannot be believed; and the only reaſon why we are ignorant at this minute of the nature of what the dramatic amuſements then were is the indifference with which all the Engliſh chroniclers, as well as thoſe whoſe works have been their ſource of intelligence, have treated a ſubject on which they have ſeldom touched, unleſs when it has involved ſome more important object, and then they have ſcarcely deigned to afford it particular notice,

the kingdom enjoyed profound peace, for want of such a patron were neglected. EDWARD's quarrels with ETHELWALD engrossed his attention too much to give any object place in his mind but arms. Had ALFRED's second son, ETHELWARD, who inherited his father's genius for letters, succeeded him, 'tis very probable the dramatic art might then have been ascertained. He, however, whatever his inclination might be, found it probably very difficult to establish the arts in so turbulent a reign under so turbulent a king; he, therefore, retired and spent a short life in various studies, and in particular philosophy and theology.

ATHELSTAN was a king as little likely to promote the arts as EDWARD. He had foreign and domestic enemies; and, in spight of all his efforts, licentiousness grew to such an intolerable height that EDMUND, his successor, who thought he should put a stop to it by extending the rigour of the penal laws, was massacred for his pains by a thief. EDRED, who was little more than a Regent, and who suffered himself in the most turbulent times to be blindly led by DUNSTAN, by which means the monks ruled the kingdom, and would have turned it into a papal province had he not died, gave also poor encouragement to the arts. There are, nevertheless, many reasons to suspect that during this and

the preceding reign the myſteries, or perhaps miracle-plays, which will be fully deſcribed hereafter, originated, or rather were revived, for it is extremely difficult to ſay when they originated.

Before DUNSTAN, the monks were ſecular prieſts. They had the education of youth and taught in families as well as in ſchools; and we have always found, that in order to enforce education, ſomething in the nature of theſe miracle plays was performed, in which there had been perpetually a contention between the prieſts and the lay brothers. It is, therefore, very probable that, when DUNSTAN in the plenitude of his power eſtabliſhed the benedictine order, and endeavoured to render every thing completely eccleſiaſtical, theſe plays performed by the ſecular monks were put down, or rather ſuſpended, in one form or another; for, as many of theſe lay brothers did nothing more than become monks under monaſtic reſtriction, it is very unlikely, though the place of action might be altered, that. the farce itſelf did not go on; eſpecially as St. DUNSTAN himſelf was a very good actor, particularly in pantomime, witneſs the unmerciful manner in which he took the devil by the noſe.

It is alſo difficult to diſbelieve that the pranks

DUNSTAN played poor EDWY, and the wanton and unmanly indignities which through him were offered to his innocent and lovely queen, could have paſſed without comment; eſpecially as in ſpight of his power he had not yet extirpated the ſecular clergy, who were both able and willing, for the ſake of decency, and in juſtice to their injured king, to expoſe ſuch inſolence and rapacity; and that they did expoſe it by ſome means of this kind is not at all improbable, when we know that not more than eighty years afterwards, as we ſhall ſee in its place, a play was introduced in the common ſports of the people in deriſion of HARDICANUTE's coronation *.

* Various other curious tricks are related of this holy hypocrite; among theſe his miracle by which he wholly got rid of the ſecular prieſts is not amiſs. After a variety of warm diſputes, in which the laiety were ſometimes victorious and ſometimes the clergy, it was agreed to refer every thing to a ſolemn inveſtigation in a Synod to be held in WILTSHIRE. This Synod being met and the controverſy propounded, the parties addreſſed each other in a ſtrain of the bitterеſt invective; till, as they were on the point of proceeding from words to blows the floor of the room, which was an upper apartment, gave way and came to the ground with the greateſt violence; in conſequence of which many limbs were broken, and ſome lives loſt. The poſt, however, on which DUNSTAN's chair was placed ſtood firm, by which means he eſcaped the fate of the reſt. This was conſidered as a miracle in favour of the monks, and the ſecular clergy of courſe loſt their cauſe. He alſo played another prank with a poſt; which, ſtarting from its ſituation, had very nearly deſtroyed a whole building. By only, however, making the ſign of

EDGAR, whose own story, including his marriage with ELFRIDA after the murder of her husband, has been more than once made the subject of a play, is known to have countenanced magnificient entertainments, and, therefore, he no doubt encouraged plays. 'Tis hardly to be supposed that he, whom the monks permitted to practice every scandalous and treacherous art while they called him the most perfect of mankind, had not his minstrels to feed his vanity. His carrying off the nun, which the priests piously permitted, and his breach of hospitality, by means of which his mistress, ELFLEDA, was palmed upon him, are of too romantic a cast not to have called for celebration; besides he notoriously suffered his people to take, in every thing, their own course; by which means, though his own reign was undisturbed, the consequences fell heavy on his

---

a cross upon it with his finger, it returned very quietly to its place, and the building became again secure. But why should we wonder that he was so expert at those wooden miracles when his very harp would work miracles of itself; for while it played at his command several hymns untouched by any human hand, the Virgin MARY condescendingly came and sung to it. Then for angels, he had them of all descriptions for his familiar acquaintance, and thus by their assistance he had it so completely in his power to resist the devil, that in all manner of shapes he whipt him away with thongs and cords; nay, when he came to him in the form of a woman, he pinched him by the nose with a pair of red hot tongs, that by destroying his beauty there might be no motive left for temptation.

ſucceſſor, the unfortunate EDWARD, whoſe unquiet reign was terminated by his ſtepmother, ELFRIDA, who cauſed him to be aſſaſſinated that ſhe might place her own ſon, ETHELRED, upon the throne.

ETHELRED, the offspring of ingratitude, profligacy, and murder, ſpoke his origin in all his actions; in conſequence of which, diſſention, folly, and vice ſtalked through the kingdom, and were no doubt reflected by ſatire's mirror. Owing to this the Danes grew ſo powerful that, when EDMUND IRONSIDE ſucceeded to the defence of the kingdom, he had ſcarcely a kingdom to defend.

ETHELRED was another NERO to BRITAIN. He bribed the Danes many times to retire, who always returned in exultation. He permitted continually a Daniſh army in the kingdom, and thereby ſubjected it to a thraldom ſuch as it had experienced in the hands of the Romans at the time of BOADICEA. The ſame rapacity, the ſame profligacy, the ſame infamy prevailed. Alarmed, therefore, for the conſequence, and adviſed by EDRICK, with whom he is ſaid to have ſhared ſome of the money the people gave to bribe the Danes, he cauſed a general maſſacre of them throughout the kingdom.

This of courſe rouſed the Danes, who breaking

through all treaties, came so powerfully upon him, that he first retired to NORMANDY, but returned upon the death of SWEYN, who had occupied the English crown six weeks.

ETHELRED's imbecility, cowardice, and folly, however, had by this time made him an object of detestation to his subjects; and he finished an inglorious reign, in the midst of difficulties, which his son EDMUND vainly struggled with great courage and perseverance to dissipate; till, after a single combat between EDMUND and CANUTE, which was advised by the very EDRICK who had been the parasite of ETHELRED, and who afterwards murdered EDMUND to present CANUTE with his head, the kingdom was by agreement divided in two.

During all these contentions we hear of sports but nothing more. The priests seem to have been silent. I shall, therefore, urge no further probabilities of the existence of interludes, or other dramatic amusements at that time than the proofs which will be presently advanced that they were well known at the death of HARDICANUTE.

The reign of CANUTE, which passed entirely in reconciling jarring opinions, he at all times em-

bracing that conduct moſt likely to conciliate the affection of the people, was certainly favourable to amuſements. He built churches, endowed monaſtries, and appointed revenues for the celebration of maſs. Nay, he made a pilgrimage to ROME, from whence it would have been uſeleſs to return without ſomething to inſtruct and amuſe. Theſe arts, which he uſed to flatter his ſubjects were returned with the groſſeſt adulation; this gave riſe to the well known ſtory of his reproving the tide in the preſence of his courtiers. The nation, however, was immerſed in barbariſm; and, though he was greatly eſteemed for his power and his virtues, he ſucceeded but little in poliſhing the manners of his people.

HAROLD, whatever improvements CANUTE had been able to make, ſoon overturned them. As if conſcious of a very ſhort reign, he introduced diſſipation more than enough into it for a long one. It is not eaſy to ſay whether he or his brute of a brother was the moſt diſſolute and contemptible. One lived hated and diſpiſed three years, and the other but two. The firſt died a prey to remorſe for treachery towards ALFRED, a deſcendant of the Saxon kings, and the murder of him and his followers; and the other expired amidſt his beaſtly revels through plenitude and drunkenneſs.

We have upon this occaſion clearly a proof of the exiſtence of plays and interludes; for HARDICANUTE was held in ſuch contempt by his ſubjects, that a play was written after his death in deriſion, and it for a long time was annually performed by the title of *Hock Holiday**.

* Theſe annual ſports, of which this play made a part, and which were continued by the Engliſh ſo long that they are not wholly unknown even at this day, have a very early origin. If we trace buil-bateing to its ſource, throwing at cocks on Shrove Tueſday, or any other of thoſe diverſions which have been long ſanctioned by time, we ſhall find they all originated from commemorating ſome national event. This we are at preſent ſpeaking of was imitated from the Fugalia; a feaſt celebrated among the Romans in memory of the expulſion of the kings, and the aboliſhing the monarchical government, originally inſtituted under the title of the Regifugium, and held on the twenty-fourth of February, on account of the Tarquins flying from ROME on that day. There have been many diſputes as to whether theſe two words mean the ſame thing; the meaning of one of them is pretty obvious; but St. AUGUSTINE ſays that in a true fugalia all decency and modeſty were baniſhed, which clearly ſhews the two feaſts to be ſimilar. Certainly the Romans had not more reaſon to rejoice at the expulſion of the Tarquins than the Engliſh had at the expulſion of the Danes; and the ſports on Hock Holiday, or Hoke-day, which certainly was a ſolemn feſtival inſtituted at the death of HARDICANUTE, when the Engliſh were for ever releaſed from the wanton inſults and boundleſs exactions of him and his countrymen, are a poſitive proof that the inhabitants of this country were not ignorant of thoſe amuſements which made up upon public occaſions the pleaſure of the Romans, among which ſomething theatrical was always introduced. Hoke-day is known as a law term, and ſignifies a certain period which, indeed, was the ſecond Tueſday after Eaſter week, when rent became due. There

From this time forward we see by every symptom that the English encouraged interludes of various kinds. EDWARD the Confessor, who restored the Saxon line, having but slender and distant pretensions to the crown, and having been bred up in the court of NORMANDY, introduced French manners, and, therefore, facilitated the conquest. At no period of the world were there stronger contentions for pre-eminence in music than at this. BERNO, Abbot of RICHENOU, ODO, of CLUNI, GAFURIUS, GLAREANUS, and ten or twelve other writers, whose names are now before me, give us long accounts of this emulation which prevailed both in ITALY and in FRANCE. The Abbays, of CORBIE, of RHEIMS, and of CLUNI, were the great seminaries for musical instruction in FRANCE. To these, young monks were sent from ENGLAND to be taught by REMI D'AUXERRE, WIGERIC,

---

is some tenure of this kind by which Magdalan College at OXFORD hold lands in HAMPSHIRE. As to the term hocking, it was no more than this: Before the spectators arrived at the place where this play and these sports were to be performed they were obliged to pass a rope extended across the road; which, upon their paying money, was let down to give them a safe and an easy passage. If they refused to pay, it was kept up to hurt their skins and resist their coming forward. Hoke-day money, or Hoke-tuesday money, all authors agree was a tribute anciently paid the landlord for giving his tenants and his bondmen leave to celebrate Hock-day, or Hoke-day, in memory of the expulsion of the Danes.

biſhop of METZ, NOTKER LE BEGUE, and others, who were not only famous muſicians but celebrated writers; till, at length, about the time of the conqueſt of ENGLAND, appeared GUIDO ARETINE, who, though he invented nothing of muſic itſelf, ſo regulated it and reduced it to practiſe, that the art certainly benefited greatly by his improvement *.

This being the caſe, and French manners being every day introduced into ENGLAND, at the very moment too when the troubadours with their ſirventes and tenſons were overrunning NORMANDY, is it poſſible to deny that interludes, ſatires, and farces, of ſome deſcription, were known at that time in ENGLAND? Here then we will halt; for as HAROLD who, if he could be ſaid to have reigned, was merely an uſurper, nothing more can be traced of a new complexion to prove the fact which I am ſtriving to eſtabliſh, and which I have no doubt, by the corroboration of future circumſtances, will be made perfectly clear.

* We ſhall hereafter have good opportunity to ſhew that EDWARD the Confeſſor tolerated dramatic entertainments, and particularly at CHESTER, and at COVENTRY, where myſteries, as well as interludes, were certainly performed.

CHAP. V.

FROM THE NORMAN CONQUEST TO EDWARD THE THIRD.

We are now come to a period when it will be leſs difficult to aſcertain the true nature of thoſe dramatic entertainments which were performed early in England. The turbulent diſorders that had ſo long convulſed the kingdom having been in great meaſure ſhook off at the conqueſt, amuſements, which no doubt had been at different intervals alternately diſcontinued and renewed, began to be eſtabliſhed upon a more permanent footing. It alſo became more an object to authors to notice them; and, owing to this, we thereabout begin to get certain intelligence that various dramatic pieces were exhibited, and in particular myſteries, ſuch as we have ſeen, though at a much later date, ſo anxiouſly followed in France.

The Norman conqueſt was effected in 1066; and, not more than thirty-ſeven years afterwards, the priory of St. Bartholomew, in Smithfield,

was erected by a man of the name of RAHERE, who was called the King's Minſtrel, and whoſe monument is now to be ſeen in that church in the north ſide of the chancel. This man kept a company of fidlers; and, he ſo inſinuated himſelf into the good graces of HENRY the firſt early in that reign, that he gained from the king the manor of AIOT, in HERTFORDSHIRE, where, going from one extreme to another, he became religious and was the firſt prior in his own priory *

As this priory, which was deſtroyed by HENRY the eighth, was erected in 1103, and after RAHERE had run his career as a minſtrel, it cannot be denied that minſtreſly had been long well known and in great repute †. It muſt have taken him ſome years

* It is not wonderful that RAHERE ſhould be a favourite in the court of HENRY, who loved the arts, and who from his genius and literary merit obtained the title of Beauclerc, or the Scholar. Galantry was the characteriſtic of his court; and, ſo greatly did he befriend toleration, that he was the firſt king who granted the city of LONDON a charter, which laid the foundation of their privileges, and may be conſidered as the origin of Engliſh freedom.

† Leſt the employment of minſtrel ſhould be conſidered as merely that of a fidler, let it be once for all recollected that we have both French and Latin authorities to the contrary. It is derived in the French from *Meneſtrier*, which title diſtinguiſhed all the provincial poets whom, as we have ſeen, were actors, and the monkiſh hiſtorians themſelves never deſignate them but by the word *Mimus*, or *Hiſtrio*,

to have made his fortune; and then that profeſſion muſt have been pretty well reſpected by which a man could honeſtly make a fortune at all. But comments will become every moment more unneceſſary, for we ſhall ſoon have facts to bear out our argument.

While RAHERE at the head of his company was making his fortune by the interludes, which his entertainments certainly were, the prieſts, who alſo, perhaps, wiſhed to make fortunes, were very buſy in their attempts to eſtabliſh the myſteries. In the

---

or *Joculator*, or ſome other expreſſion which ſignifies geſture. It was in this capacity they were received into the preſence of the great, and it is very ſtriking that they certainly were with both friends and enemies a priviledged people; for, when ALFRED aſſumed this character in the camp of the Danes, they muſt have known him to be a Saxon, but, being a minſtrel they gave him an honourable reception; and this fact cannot be got over; for it is not enough to ſay that ALFRED, being a highly accompliſhed character, might, perhaps, have paſſed for a Dane; becauſe a Daniſh chief, about ſixty years afterwards in the face of this fact of ALFRED's having betrayed the Daniſh camp, made uſe of the ſame ſtratagem to ſurprize the camp of the Saxons in the reign of ATHELSTAN. Minſtrels, therefore, were certainly an improvement of the mimes and hiſtrions of the Romans; and their entertainments were the farces that were performed in all countries, and as perfectly dramatic as any of the maſques in the reign of ELIZABETH, or the drolls at BARTHOLOMEW Fair, which place after all might have been RAHERE's ſcene of action, eſpecially as he choſe Smithfield to finiſh his career, where, that he might not deviate, he ſtill continued in the character of an actor.

eleventh century, and if early in the eleventh century, before the conqueſt, GEFFROI, a French monk came over here and was made Abbot of St. ALBANS. This monk, being intruſted with the education of youth, made his ſcholars act this kind of tragedies, one of which was called *The Miracles of St. Catherine.*

The different accounts of this man, and this fact, agree ſo perfectly that it will be worth while to dwell on the ſubject a little longer. GEFFROI, a Norman by birth, as we are told by French and Engliſh authors, was ſent over by Abbot RICHARD to undertake the direction of the ſchool at St. ALBANS. He arrived too late and went to DUNSTABLE, where he taught in the Abbey, and ſet about performing this miracle play there. He afterwards got into the ſituation originally intended for him, and his ſcholars at St. ALBANS, acted this and, doubtleſs, other entertainments of the ſame nature, for which purpoſe the ſacriſtan lent them copes from the neighbouring Abbey, at St. ALBANS, to dreſs their characters.

Monſieur L'EXTANT thinks that this was an attempt towards the revival of dramatic entertainments all over EUROPE. Nothing can be ſtronger

than this. We have ſeen that the prieſts in FRANCE performed ſacrilgeous farces full of the groſſeſt indelicacy, and ſo offenſive againſt religion and all decency, that CHARLEMAGNE was obliged to ſuppreſs them in the eighth century. A period more than a hundred years before ALFRED. Does it not appear very feaſible then that they had been known here? Might not ETHELRED, an honeſt heathen, have been ſhocked at the ſhameful mummery of the chriſtian prieſts, and, therefore, have put down PUTTA and his followers? Who certainly underſtood the trade of acting, otherwiſe they would not have ſtrolled about afterwards as troubadours.

St. AUSTIN by the ſame token might have introduced ſome irregularities into this kingdom, eſpecially as many of his monks were Italian ſingers, a deſcription of characters which even to this moment have never been remarkably celebrated for having imported much virtue among us. It muſt be recollected that he came here with extreme reluctance, the feelings of the Saxon heathens having rather revolted at the Devil's dances performed in the churches, which St. AUSTIN with all his ſanctity, perhaps, was not able wholly to ſuppreſs; to which ſuppoſition his having previouſly determined to gain their hearts by tickling their ears rather than ap-

pealing to their understandings, lends great probability.

The idea of L'EXTANT, therefore, that GEFFROI's miracle play, or plays, for it is very unlikely that he performed but one, was a revival of those entertainments is very fair. They had been, not only in ENGLAND and in FRANCE but all over EUROPE, at different times, according as they conformed to decency and morality, or grew into licentiousness, permitted and suppressed. Nothing, therefore, can be more probable than that they had undergone an interdiction about the time of the conquest, either for improper conduct, or owing to the troubles of the times, and that GEFFROI, a Norman, came over with the Normans and revived an amusement which he thought would be welcome to a people who wished for a little relaxation after the convulsions the kingdom had sustained.

STEPHEN, who seems never to have had that truncheon out of his hand which was his only weapon of defence when he was dethroned, had virtue enough to have promoted the arts; but, owing to the turbulence of the nobles, who looked with a jealous eye on that freedom which HENRY had granted the people, his efforts at civilization were like a whisper in a tempest.

But this was not the caſe with HENRY the ſecond, his ſucceſſor, who, being ſole monarch of ENGLAND, and poſſeſſor of more than a third of FRANCE, did not fail to tranſplant here thoſe amuſements which were then the delight of the Continent. Nor was BECKET any more behind hand with him than WOLSEY with HENRY the eighth, for he paſſed through a variety of profligate pleaſures before he wore ſackcloth next his ſkin, and daily waſhed the feet of thirteen beggars.

The unbridled gallantry of HENRY, of which we have many more proofs than that of ROSAMOND, put to death by ELEONOR, who was herſelf repudiated by her firſt huſband LOUIS the ſeventh for incontinency, and who was daughter of Count VENTADOUR, a provincial poet, was good food for poetry which he certainly encouraged. Nay, his two ſons, RICHARD and GEOFFRY, whoſe undutiful conduct broke his heart, were both, as we ſhall preſently ſee, troubadours.

But, to prove that the drama was now not only well known but that it was conſidered a ſubject of ſufficient conſequence for celebration, an elaborate work was written early in the reign of HENRY which ſpeaks, not only of interludes performed at the theatre, but of plays upon more holy ſub-

jects, in which were repreſented the miracles wrought by Our SAVIOUR's diſciples, and the fortitude and conſtancy of thoſe bleſſed martyrs. Now had this author noticed theſe matters as a diſcovery, a thing that was invented or brought into ENGLAND by the Normans, we might have ground to believe that nothing dramatic, at leaſt nothing worth notice, had been known in ENGLAND before. But this is not the caſe. He does not ſpeak of theſe matters as novelties but only as a part of thoſe amuſements which had been long known and followed.

To ſay that this book was publiſhed to tell the inhabitants of LONDON, or, indeed, any part of the kingdom, that miracles were then performing, and that they then ſupplanted interludes would be nonſenſe. No man needed any ſuch information. He might mean that theſe myſteries which at that time continued to be performed had, when they were revived, put by the interludes, which was no more than the old quarrel between the prieſts and the laity; but nothing can be more clear than that this work alludes to the interludes of RAHERE, certainly performed during the reign of WILLIAM RUFUS, rigid as his character was, which, when RAHERE retired, were ſuſpended for the miracle plays of GEFFROI.

His words are, "inſtead of interludes performed "at the the theatre," from which we are obliged to infer that it had been cuſtomary to perform interludes, and at a theatre, for, probably, a long time before the conqueſt, but that at the time he ſpeaks of, thoſe interludes gave way to more holy repreſentations; clearly alluding to RAHERE and GEFFROI.

Of what materials thoſe interludes were compoſed, or on what ſort of theatre they were repreſented, it is not very eaſy to determine; nor, indeed, is it very eſſential. The theatre, however, implies ſome regular place, ſome well known ſituation, frequented and tolerated; and the amuſements were probably a mixture of thoſe performed by the the trouveres and the troubadours in PROVENCE, adopted according to circumſtances to the Engliſh taſte by thoſe minſtrels who ever ſince ALFRED had been encouraged to viſit ENGLAND from ITALY.

At any rate 'tis plain to be ſeen that religion did for ENGLAND what it had done for FRANCE; and, in proportion as WILLIAM aboliſhed the trials by ordeal, the camp fights, and all thoſe ſavage practices which had been held in ſuch veneration by the Saxons, the prieſts took the opportunity of incul-

cating morality by dramatic repreſentations of thoſe holy facts, the parade of which has oftener made proſelytes than the doctrine.

This will ſhew in almoſt an indubitable light that thoſe arts which ALFRED protected, and, to promulgate which he, like other princes of all times, became a writer and a performer, and which we have traced through almoſt the whole of the Saxon heptarchy, obtained here as well as in ITATY and as in FRANCE; and that, fluctuating according to circumſtances, they were ſometimes ſacred and ſometimes profane.

RICHARD CŒUR DE LION ſucceeded to HENRY the ſecond; who, not more than a hundred and twenty years after the conqueſt, was, as we have ſeen, celebrated in PROVENCE as a poet and a performer, and ſo was his brother GEOFFRY. We have a great variety of authorities for this, corroborated by circumſtances which we cannot eaſily doubt; and which, after all, was not wonderful in RICHARD, for it was only taking after his mother's family.

The whole intelligence concerning this buſineſs is clogged with contradiction and abſurdity; but it is, however, univerſally allowed that he reſided in

PROVENCE, probably in the court of GISBERT the ſecond Count *, and that he wrote ſonnets and other poetry. Some of which are complaints againſt his barons for ſuffering him to remain in captivity. Theſe were addreſſed to the princeſſes of the court, and ſome of them are now to be found in ancient authors. The authorities for all this reſt upon CRESCEMBINI, MATHEW PARIS, RYMER, FAVINE, BEAUCHAMP, and many others; who, however they may vary in immaterial particulars, all agree upon the general fact †.

From FAVINE, we have the intereſting intel-

---

* It has been aſſerted that RICHARD lived in the court of RAIMOND BERENGER, and that he married one of his daughters. Both theſe aſſertions are falſe. RICHARD died in 1199, at which time BERENGER was but a year old, for BERENGER died in 1245, at the age of forty ſeven.

† An ancient bard, called GUILHEM BRITON, has the following diſtich, ſpeaking of RICHARD:

Coblas a tiera faire adroitement,
Pou vos oillez enten dompna gentilz.

which may be thus tranſlated:

Stanzas he invented neat
Upon the eyes of ladies ſweet.

But RYMER gives us the following extract and its tranſlation from a ſong RICHARD wrote when he was priſoner in AUSTRIA.

ligence of his being releaſed from captivity through the aſſiſtance of BLONDEL, who was bred up in his court, and with whom he had been accuſtomed to ſing ſongs in dialogue. This BLONDEL, who was a native of NESLE, and had been from his infancy a trouverre, followed the fortunes of RICHARD; and, when by the treachery of the duke of AUSTRIA he was confined, he ſought with every poſſible diligence for his maſter, purſuing ſtill his occupation of minſtrel, in hopes that ſome intelligence by good fortune might reach the king through which he might work out his releaſe. By an unexpected chance he happened to come near the caſtle where his maſter was confined; who, upon hearing without the wall one half of a well known ſong, and recollecting perfectly the voice of BLONDEL, ſung the other

---

Or ſachan ben mos homs & mos barons;
Anglez, Normans, Peytavins, & Gaſcons,
Qu' yeu non ay ja ſi paure compagnon,
Que per aver lou laiſſeſs en preſon.

Know ye, my men, my barons all,
In England, and in Normandy,
In Poictiers, and in Gaſcony,
I no companion held ſo ſmall
To let him thus in durance lie.

This tranſlation is bad enough certainly; but it helps ſtrongly to corroborate that RICHARD was one of the Provincial poets.

half himſelf that their intelligence might be mutual. This hint was enough for BLONDEL. He, returning privately to ENGLAND, informed the barons where their king was impriſoned, who immediately ſet about, and at length accompliſhed, his releaſe.

In addition to theſe and other proofs that RICHARD was actually and to the fulleſt extent one of the provincial poets, I have a variety of authorities that cannot be queſtioned. Nevertheleſs, to ſhew the fact as ſtrong as poſſible, and alſo that his poetical propenſity greatly forwarded the dramatic art in ENGLAND, beſides BLONDEL, FOUQUET, and others, that FAIDIT, of whom we have ſeen BEAUCHAMP the panegyriſt, and whoſe works contain the rudiments of regular tragedy, which PARASOLS afterwards is ſaid to have perfected, came to ENGLAND with RICHARD, and it was immediately upon this that, not only at the Engliſh court but in all families of diſtinction, interludes and other performances in the ſtyle of ſirventes and tenſons were performed, both by performers hired for the purpoſe and by the great themſelves; which was ſo cuſtomary, ſay BEDE and others, that ſuch as were not capable of joining were neceſſitated to retire *.

* FAIDIT was certainly a dramatic writer of conſiderable emi-

From this time theſe amuſements were not only tolerated in the capital, but they were encouraged throughout the kingdom; for, though theſe minſtrels were conſidered as vagabonds, in common with fencers, bearwards, &c. yet many inſtances of favour were ſhewn to them all, and well it might be ſo; for the gentry conſtantly mixed in their ſports. It is on this account, probably, that they have been on ſo many occaſions entitled to the pro-

---

nence. BEAUCHAMP, who, by the way, has in many inſtances refuted the errors of other authors, ſpeaks poſitively of the tragedies and comedies of FAIDIT; and does not heſitate to ſay that he got prodigious ſums by them in quality of manager; which wealth, being a great voluptuary, he diſſipated as faſt as it came. All this muſt have been when he was very young, for it was in conſequence of the difficulties into which he was driven by theſe exceſſes, that he entered into the ſervice of RICHARD, and it is very probable, though all authors do not agree in this, that it was before he came to ENGLAND he ſtole a nun whom he made his wife, and afterwards exhibited her as a ſinger and an actreſs, in which capacities ſhe is ſaid to have been excellent. She ſerved him, however, a great many ſlippery tricks, and, at the death of his patron, he returned to PROVENCE, having firſt written a funeral poem in honour of RICHARD. There, it is probable, the friends he acquired being very powerful, he obtained his pardon, for we find him again very celebrated and greatly protected. His comedy called *L'Heregia dels Preyers*, procured him the patronage of BONIFACE, Count of MONTFERRAT. He muſt have died about 1230, at between fifty and ſixty; for it muſt always be remarked that the dates placed againſt the names of the provincial poets are not thoſe of their births, but either of their deaths, or the times they were in the higheſt reputation.

tection of the law. Ever ſince the time of king JOHN to this hour, in all the laws for the regulation of amuſements, there is an exemption in favour of the minſtrels of CHESTER *, and ever ſince JOHN of GAUNT, in favour of thoſe of TUTBURY, in STAFFORDSHIRE †.

---

* The occaſion of this exemption is curious enough; but perhaps I ſhould paſs it by did it not tend to corroborate what I am labouring to prove. In the reign of king JOHN, RANDLE, earl of CHESTER, being ſhut up by the Welch in the caſtle of Rothelent in FLINTSHIRE, ſent to ROGER DE LACEY, or, as others ſay, ROBERT, conſtable of CHSETER, to come inſtantly to his aſſiſtance with any and every kind of force he could muſter. It being then the Fair-time when, of courſe, all kinds of ſports were going forward, LACEY gathered together a large multitude of fidlers, ſtageplayers, ſhoemakers, and other debauched perſons, who aſſailed the Welch and reſcued the earl from priſon. RANDLE out of gratitude gave LACEY authority over the fidlers, ſtageplayers, and ſhoemakers of CHESTER. He, however, availed himſelf only of his power and donation to him and his heirs over the ſhoemakers, but conſigned the remainder of his privileges to his ſteward, JOHN DUTTON, whoſe heirs have ever ſince enjoyed it; as may be ſeen by the Vagabond Act, in the ſeventeenth year of GEORGE the ſecond, which contains a proviſo in favour of that family, giving licence to them and their heirs to tolerate minſtrels and players of interludes at CHESTER in excluſion of all other authority.

† When the ancient earls and dukes of LANCASTER, who were always of the blood royal, kept their abode at TUTBURY, muſicians and performers of maſques, interludes, and other entertainments, came to amuſe the great concourſe of people that flocked thither from all parts. The performers, being very numerous, many quarrels happened among them; in conſequence of which many laws were

Though we have plainly ſeen that JOHN, whoſe reign was equally remarkable for wickedneſs and weakneſs, countenanced dramatic amuſements, yet the arts certainly materially declined during that period. HENRY the third, however, muſt have inevitably reſtored them, for he married ELEONOR, daughter of BERENGER, that provincial nobleman and troubadour, who has been already noticed. He invited her relations and friends to reſide in ENGLAND, laviſhed on them coſtly and extravagant preſents, manifeſted the greateſt fondneſs and affection for them, gave them places of truſt and emolument, and married them to ſons and daughters of the Engliſh nobility *.

---

made for regulating their conduct, and a governor was appointed over them by the title of their King. The firſt of theſe charters granted to a king of the minſtrels was by JOHN of GAUNT, in the fourth year of RICHARD the ſecond's reign.

* There is a circumſtance relative to the fortune of that extraordinary man, RAYMOND BERENGER, which may not be unentertaining. His court was frequented by literary characters of all deſcriptions. Among the reſt came a pilgrim named ROMEO. At this time, owing to his imprudent liberality and profuſion, the affairs of BERENGER were ſo deranged that he had been under the neceſſity of mortgaging his poſſeſſions. Struck with the extraordinary wit and good ſenſe of ROMEO, who had returned from a viſit to the church of St. JAMES at COMPOSTELLA, he ſingled him out as his adviſer and confidential friend upon this occaſion. ROMEO undertook, by reducing his expences and getting him out of the hands of uſurers, to

He made a Poictevin biſhop of WINCHESTER,

---

reſtore to his patron, his eſtates, and revenues; and, being truſted with unlimitted power and controul, he even effected more than he had promiſed, for he not only redeemed but improved his friend's affairs. His next project was to marry BERENGER's four daughters, his only iſſue, to four kings; which he alſo as we have ſeen effected. This has particular relation to the ſubject we are now upon, for ROMEO was indefatigable, through theſe various and ſplended connections, to extend not only the influence of BERENGER but the cauſe of poetry, of which he was a profeſſor and an admirer; and thus we account for the prodigious number of provincials invited over to ENGLAND by HENRY the third, who married ELEONOR, the ſecond daughter. The Count, however, as much a bard as he was, did not ſeem in this inſtance to underſtand poetical juſtice, the great perſons with whom he now became connected, jealous that he ſhould ſhew ſuch extraordinary attention to an utter ſtranger, raiſed ſo violent a clamour againſt him that they induced BERENGER to call his adminiſtration to account, aſſuring him that ſuch tranſactions would tranſpire as would induce his diſmiſſion. ROMEO ſubmitted to a ſtrict enquiry which triumphantly redounded to his honour. BERENGER, aſhamed of his conduct, entreated that what had paſſed might be forgotten. "Count," ſaid the pilgrim, "I have long "had your confidence, and I have raiſed your very moderate fortune "to a prodigious one. You have ungratefully liſtened to my ene- "mies, who are confounded at my integrity. I came into your court "poor; you relieved me and my fidelity requited you; I have no- "thing I can call my own but my mule, my ſtaff, and my pouch. "Return me theſe, and farewell for ever." In this reſolution he perſiſted. He departed and left BERENGER in diſpair and ſorrow for having abuſed the trueſt and moſt diſintereſted friend he had ever known. In vain did he attempt to recal him; every perquiſition proved fruitleſs. The honeſt injured creature was never after heard of. This fact is inconteſtible. Many authors have given it without any material alteration; and FONTENELLE was ſo affected with it

ſent over his mother for other provincial ſtrangers, and at laſt was ſo fond of acting theſe kind of farces, that he ſeverely exaſperated his people againſt him; and, had not his gallant ſon EDWARD towards the end of his long and turbulent reign, checked the unbounded and profligate licentiouſneſs of his internal enemies, it would have been impoſſible for him to have ſat quietly on the throne.

EDWARD the firſt, who conquered the Welch, and afterwards rendered himſelf celebrated by completely ſubduing the Scotch, though he had a great and noble ſoul was but little at leiſure to cultivate the arts. The great hinge on which hiſtory turns is war; and thus, eſpecially if they ſhould be harraſſed by internal war, we find the hiſtories of all nations involved in a ſeries of ſanguinary diſputes, while the milder and more beneficent attractions, which ought to characterize human nature, become ſubordinate conſiderations, and it is on this account that the relaxations which nature and reaſon permit are ſo difficult to be aſcertained. Great men, in the exerciſe of that ferocity taught in camps, ſometimes forget that clemency is the warrior's beſt virtue.

---

that he intended to have made it a work of itſelf if his avocations had permitted him. Nay, DANTE in a poem places ROMEO, for his virtues, in Heaven.

So it happened to EDWARD; who, from a miſtaken and miſerable notion that it would be good policy to exterminate with the Welch every trace of their greatneſs, maſſacred every poor unfortunate bard that could be found. Upon another occaſion he paid as little reſpect to the clergy; for, though he had no deſign upon their lives, he had upon the means whereby they lived. When the Pope exonerated them from paying moſt heavy taxes which were levied on them, EDWARD refuſed them his temporal protection, ſo that they were virtually outlaws, and continually robbed and plundered by the peaſantry, who had permiſſion to commit theſe outrages with impunity.

Thus neither ſacred nor profane actors ſtood much chance of encouragement. Dramatic amuſements, however, certainly at intervals went on and particularly thoſe which were tolerated by JOHN, and performed by the minſtrels of CHESTER. Theſe were played at Whitſuntide, and the different companies of traders were employed three days in the repreſentation of them.

Theſe dramas were taken from the Old and New Teſtament, and were full of the groſſeſt buffoonery. Each company had its particular play. *The Creation* was performed by the Drapers;

Abraham, Melchiſedec, and Lot, by the Barbers; *The Salutation and Nativity*, by the Wrights; *The Three Kings*, by the Vintners; *The Fall of Lucifer*, by the Tanners; *The Purification*, by the Blackſmiths; *The Deluge*, by the Dyers; *The ſending of the Holy Ghoſt*, by the Fiſhmongers; *Moſes, Balack, and Balaam*, by the Cappers; *The Oblation of the Three Kings*, by the Mercers; *The Shepherds feeding their Flocks by Night*, by the Painters and Glaziers; *The Killing of the Innocents*, by the Goldſmiths; *The Temptation*, by the Butchers; *Chriſt's Paſſion*, by the Bowyers, Fletchers and Ironmongers; *Jeſus and the Lepers*, by the Corveſaries; *Deſcent into Hell*, by the Cooks and Innkeepers; *Antichriſt*, by the Clothiers; *The Aſcenſion*, by the Taylors; *The Blindmen and Lazarus*, by the Glovers; *The Reſurrection*, by the Skinners; and *The Day of Judgment*, by the Webſters.

If this were taken literally, we ſhould ſee all the inhabitants of CHESTER in the capacity of actors; but it is more probable that, as CHESTER was a privileged place for theſe dramas, the different companies employed certain actors to perform ſuch pieces as were reſpectively allotted to them. But theſe by no means entirely made up all the dramatic performances of the CHESTER actors, for they had

interludes upon profane ſubjects; and, in particular, ſeveral which related to earl RANDLE, by whoſe intereſt, as we have ſeen, they originally became a privileged company regulated by a king, or manager *.

If EDWARD the firſt, gave but little encouragement to the arts, his ſon, unlike his father in every other reſpect, was equally unlike him in this; for led about by his favourite GAVESTON, and afterwards by the SPENSERS, he went to the other extreme and encouraged every thing that was licentious. In this ſtrange, irregular, unquiet, and diſſolute reign, however, nothing could be expected to the honour of any human purſuit. Both ENGLAND and FRANCE, familiar with the horrid ſlaughter committed by the Saracens and Chriſtians in the cruſades, and the fantaſtic and extravagant manner in which they celebrated their atchieve-

* Theſe interludes, in honour of RANDLE, obtained without interruption till RICHARD the ſecond; but there are writers who ſtrongly contend that the privelege granted by RANDLE was no more than a revival of one which had been given by LEOFRIC, earl of CHESTER, in the time of EDWARD the Confeſſor; which ſeems, indeed, to infer that the Whitſun plays were performed at that early period; for the grant was for three days during the Fair, and, ſo devoted were thoſe days to ſport and pleaſure that, even if a known thief came there, ſo he committed no depredation on the ſpot, he was to be privileged during that time from being apprehended.

ments on their return, knew not, whether in their pleaſures or their cruelties, how to be barbarous enough. The Queen's unbridled paſſion for MORTIMER encouraged the profligacy of both; and, after the mutual abandoned pleaſures and mercileſs butcheries which were finiſhed by the king's ſhocking and deteſtable murder, no wonder if ſo many looſe and diſorderly perſons infeſted the kingdom, that it became neceſſary in the following reign to reſtrain all kind of licentiouſneſs, and in particular the licentiouſneſs of actors.

CHAP. VI.

FROM THE VAGRANT ACT OF EDWARD THE THIRD, TO THE REGULATION OF THEATRES BY QUEEN ELIZABETH.

THE continual ſtruggles between holy and profane theatricals, fluctuating ſometimes in favour of the clergy, and ſometimes in favour of the laity, arrived, at length, to ſuch a profligate pitch, that, exactly as in ROME and in FRANCE, it was thought expedient to ſuppreſs theſe repreſentations altogether; not, however, in the Roman manner by the puniſhment of death, nor in the French manner by menacing damnation, but in the true Grecian way by the diſcipline of the carts tail; for, early in the reign of EDWARD the third, and about two hundred and fifty years after the conqueſt, it was ordained by an act of parliament, "that a company of men, "called vagrants, who had made maſquerades "throughout the whole city, ſhould be whipt out "of LONDON, becauſe they repreſented ſcanda-"lous things in little alehouſes, and other places "where the populace aſſembled."

The neceſſity of this ſhews inconteſtibly that theſe ſcandalous doings had long been common, and that, whatever temporary checks they might have received from former kings, they had now got to ſuch an ungovernable degree of licentiouſneſs that it required that ſerious intervention to ſtop their progreſs. The operation of this interdiction was the ſame in ENGLAND as in FRANCE. Interludes upon profane ſubjects were either performed, by ſtealth or in private families, upon certain feſtivals, at weddings, or other ſplendid entertainments. Theſe, we are told, were exhibited "by ingenious "tradeſmen and gentlemens' ſervants," no doubt hired minſtrels, and that they were ſplendid or otherwiſe, according to the condition of the perſon for whoſe entertainment they were performed; that they were only permitted, and always tacitly, when they expoſed vice or repreſented noble deeds in former times.

And here it will be neceſſary to go a little into the ſpirit of the literature of thoſe times, in order to ſee what thoſe interludes were. During the long reign of EDWARD the third, gallantry and elegance characterized his court; the Order of the Garter was eſtabliſhed, and the repeated victories againſt the French introduced, with their king and his retinue, who were priſoners in ENGLAND, every im-

provement that the French had imbibed from their neighbours, or taught themſelves.

The character of EDWARD was to give a poliſh to bravery, and to ſoften the rigour of courage with the mildneſs of generoſity; and, however, ferocious the Engliſh are thought to have been at that time, the ſingle trait of that modeſt dignity, that noble forbearance, that generous ſolicitude in EDWARD the Black Prince, when, though young, ambitious, and enterpriſing, he threw off every quality but beneficence in conſoling and ſolacing his priſoner the king of FRANCE, is enough to ſhew that the Engliſh were then capable of that refined honour which has never, to the ſame pure, diſintereſted, and uncontaminated degree, been the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of any other people.

This ſtruggle, however, between valour and benevolence, engroſſed the whole attention of the times. The arts and ſciences were, therefore, little known. The gallantry of the Engliſh was confined to the exerciſe of open and manly exploits, without a knowledge of the ſtratagems of war; and, if it had not been that the favour of ſome miſtreſs was indiſpenſibly neceſſary as a ſtimulus towards a conqueſt at a tournament, a politeneſs and an attention to the fair would have but little marked the conduct

of the court of EDWARD. Nay, perhaps, that provocation lady SALISBURY's garter would have been but a ſlight inducement to the eſtabliſhment of that order, had it not given an opportunity of reviving ARTHUR's round table *.

This of courſe checked materially the progreſs of literature; nor would it probably have been much regarded had not a memorable combination of talents at that time diſtinguiſhed themſelves throughout EUROPE. DANTE, who was the panegyriſt of the moſt celebrated troubadours, and whoſe writings have a poliſh unknown before his time; PETRARCH, the ſcholar of DANTE, whoſe poetry,

* All this is neither more nor leſs than the entremets. The interludes complained of in this reign were relieved by various ſports. Exerciſes of warlike feats on horſeback with unarmed lances, battles on the water curiouſly performed with ſhields and lances, fighting of boars and bulls, hunting and hawking. In ſhort, we trace back to ALFRED ſo ſtrong a ſimilitude of this mixture of amuſements, that it is impoſſible to ſuppoſe they ſeldom exiſted ſeparately. In ſummer, leaping, dancing, ſhouting, wreſtling, caſting the ſtone, and practiſing the ſhield. In winter, bull and bear-beating, feats on the ice, or ſetting the boars together to fight which were intended for brawn. All which ſports the maidens accompanied with their timbrels. But there was a ſport in particular which prevailed greatly about the middle of the thirteenth century, when the entremets were the rage in FRANCE, it was called Running at the Quinten, at which game, exactly as in FRANCE, whoever won was rewarded with a peacock.

thanks to love and LAURA, had an inimitable tenderneſs in it; and BOCCACE, the ſcholar of PETRARCH, who gave the Italian tongue that ſweetneſs and grace which has ever ſince diſtinguiſhed it from all other languages; ſpread their genius, their fancy, and their elegance, to every people capable of imbibing them.

ENGLAND of courſe caught their influence, and CHAUCER, who was certainly a better poet than either of theſe, and who has been held up by the Engliſh in the ſame degree of veneration as HOMER was with the Greeks, and VIRGIL with the Romans, was endowed with every ſuſceptibility to add whatever he thought requiſite of their refinements to his own admirable talents. But this would be extraneous did it not tend to prove ſomething dramatic; to do which we have only to inſtance the *Decameron* of BOCCACE, and the *Canterbuty Tales* of CHAUCER, which contain an inexhauſtible fund for all that can be done in comedy, and unequivocally ſerve to ſhew that the drama was not only always known but always conſidered as the beſt vehicle for deſcriptive poetry; becauſe the ſubjects of the tales in the *Decameron*, or at leaſt many of them, are taken from authors of former ages and adopted to the times and manners of the country in which BOCCACE wrote.

This is again the caſe with CHAUCER; who, though he took ſubjects from BOCCACE which BOCCACE had borrowed before, has given us a picture of our own times and manners ſo clearly that not a ſingle character has eſcaped him; and the various ſhades and diſtinctions of his deſcriptions are ſo nice, ſo critical, and ſo true to nature, that no poet whoſe delineations of human life are faithful could avoid, though he had never read CHAUCER, being in ſome degree his imitator; and what leſſon after all do we learn from this but that nature is always the ſame, has been always deſcribed; and, however affections and paſſions, through the modes of times and manners may vary her operations, yet the motives that regulate the mind are conſtant and invariable.

After this it would be folly to ſay that CHAUCER could not have written a comedy, or that BOCCACE could not, or that any of thoſe more ancient writers could not, who furniſhed from writers ſtill more ancient the ſource whence they drew their productions. We have hitherto ſeen that authors have always borrowed of each other, and we ſhall never ſee to the contrary; and, whether the thing itſelf be a vehicle in which characters are introduced and contraſted through the medium of narrative, or

whether thoſe characters are perſonated, the only diſtinction is that both are dramatic, but that only one is dramatized, and, therefore, that either poſſeſſes all the requiſites of the dramatic art.

If then every thing dramatic was comprized in the works of CHAUCER, and if LANGELAND's *Viſions*, a celebrated work, and alſo ſome writings of GOWER, both cotemporaries of CHAUCER, were in the ſame ſpirit, it is impoſſible but that the authors of interludes at that time muſt have availed themſelves of ſuch models, eſpecially as thoſe authors were ſo numerous, and in point of merit ſo obſcure; and thus CHAUCER, a courtier, and a great man, GOWER a divine, and LANGELAND a diſciple of WICKLIFF, gave their works that turn which was moſt likely to entertain the great and the erudite, rather than amuſe diſorderly perſons in little alehouſes. But to return.

As the act for the puniſhing of vagrants was not in its ſpirit intended to check any thing that might encourage the growth of morality, for ſurely nothing could be wiſer than to ſuppreſs ſcandalous things performed in alehouſes, the clergy of ENGLAND, feeling like the clergy of all other countries, that inſtruction comes more welcome to the mind when it is received through the medium of

amuſement, prepared a ſtock of religious tragedies after the model of GEFFROI; which there can be no doubt had continued to be tolerated from the time that the itinerant interludes were ſuppreſſed.

The prieſts who were too cunning to incur a whipping, eſtabliſhed their ſacred dramas exactly as GEFFROI had done his; and, as they were many of them heads of ſchools, their ſcholars naturally became their actors, which it is impoſſible to blame for they were by this means taught at once religion and elocution.

A petition to king RICHARD the ſecond, in 1378, from the ſcholars of St. PAUL's ſchool, puts this matter out of doubt; for it ſhews that the religious plays had not only been long performed but that their ſucceſs and celebrity were ſo great as to have induced others to attempt the ſame ſpecies of entertainment. The petition prayed his majeſty "to prohibit a company of unexpert people from "repreſenting the Hiſtory of the Old Teſtament, to "the great prejudice of the ſaid clergy, who had "been at great charge and expence to repreſent it "publicly at Chriſtmas."

This, as SHAKESPEAR ſays, denotes a foregone concluſion. It poſitively implies that theſe clergy,

by fome means or other had obtained an exclufive right to perform thefe myfteries; for upon what other pretence could they petition the king to prohibit thefe opponents; and this right of theirs muft alfo have been pretty ftable, otherwife fuch a peremtory petition might have fhaken it. But what are thefe perfons they wifh to put down? Why a fet of "unexpert people," novices, innovators, who had not like thefe prieſts been long eſtabliſhed and celebrated as performers of myfteries, or, as they call it, of "the Hiftory of the Old Teftament."

Does not this clearly prove that, as this company of holy actors were expert at their profeffion in 1378, the myfteries had been regularly performed in ENGLAND at St. PAUL's fchool, more, perhaps many more, than twenty years before they were performed in FRANCE in the Bourg of St. MAUR, where we firft hear of them in 1398. Nay, is it not very likely that, in 1378, thefe clergy had performed as long, with as good fuccefs, and were as firmly eſtabliſhed as the Confraternity of the Paffion, when as innovators they began to look with a jealous eye on the clerks of the Bazoche; for we fhall fee that no longer than twelve years after this petition, thefe myfteries were not only performed at Clerkenwell, but attended by all the nobility and gentry.

The accounts we have of this buſineſs are, that the pariſh clerks of LONDON performed theſe myſteries, firſt at Skinner's Well, and afterwards at Clerkenwell, or Clerk's Well; which place took its name from this circumſtance. This, however, taken literally, is a very ſtrange conjecture. The pariſh clerks of LONDON, I believe, have never been very celebrated for elocution, and then they are by no means a community. It is, therefore, much more feaſible that theſe clerks were lay-brothers of the church, ſuch as minor-canons, who to this day in cathedrals ſing themſelves into their ſtalls juſt as counſellors eat their way to the bar.

Theſe might have called in the aſſiſtance of graduates and choirmen, by which union we have inſtantly a number of performers whoſe habits of education give us a better idea of literary merit than, without offence to the pariſh clerks, who ſeem to have been groſsly libelled in this buſineſs, we ſhould be likely to find in a ſet of old gentlemen, from whom nothing more could be expected than to ſay Amen with a good grace. Nor can any thing impeach the probability of this conjecture, for the deſignation of every clergyman at this moment is clerk from the deacon to the prelate; and, in its extended clerical ſenſe, it implies all chantors.

These gentlemen, being generally in the vigour of life, were very likely to excite the attention that we are told was actually paid them; for, whatever might have been the opinion of the clergy they so greatly prejudiced at St. Paul's school, it turned out at last that they were so expert as to keep all the dramatic reputation to themselves.

The clerks of the Bazoche, which were no other than the lay clergy, and the clerks of Clerkenwell will now appear so uniformly upon the same footing, that their conduct and its operation were exactly alike. They continued the mysteries only till they had carried their point; till, in proportion as the public taste became more polished, and they grew weary of representing miracles from the Old and New Testament, they introduced the moralities, in which, by personifying virtues and vices, instead of saints and martyrs, they insinuated a love of moral and social duty by appealing to the affections of the mind*.

These moralities were not, however, at times,

* It is a very singular coincidence, that, when the clerks of the Bazoche placed themselves under the protection of Philip le Bel, he regulated their community and chose from among them a head, or director, to whom he gave the title of their king, exactly answering to our title of king of the minstrels.

without a mixture of religius circumſtances and characters. In ſhort, they were ſometimes wholly religious, ſometimes wholly mythological, and ſometimes both. Innovations, however, of various kinds were attempted, all which were of courſe imitated throughout the kingdom. At length HAYWOOD, HENRY the eighth's jeſter, and his adherents, like the children of Sans Souci, introduced interludes repreſenting the manners of perſons in common life. From theſe reſulted ſomething like regular plays which excited ſo much curioſity that the whole kingdom ſwarmed with actors, till, at length, after many fruitleſs attempts to ſuppreſs them, they were entirely put down by queen ELIZABETH with a view to ſelect ſuch parts of this chaos as might form a natural theatrical world.

But to trace the ſteps that led to this regulation. RICHARD the ſecond having countenanced the myſteries at Clerkenwell, HENRY the fourth, his ſucceſſor, who had reaſon enough to keep the people in good humour that they might the eaſier forget by what means he came at the crown, permitted this indulgence to the fulleſt extent, for he was frequently preſent at theſe exhibitions with the queen and all the nobles of his court, and particularly to witneſs a performance which laſted eight days, and which took its ſtory from the creation of the world.

This toleration was, however, of courſe very much abuſed, for the people became ſo mad after theſe myſteries that they were preſently performed all over the kingdom. We hear of theatres upon wheels, exactly like the cart of THESPIS, being drawn about COVENTRY and other places, in which the fairs exhibited ſcenes, and repreſented pageants upon Corpus-Chriſti day; the ſtories always from the Old and New Teſtament, and compoſed in Engliſh rhime.

There is a manuſcript in the Cottonian library from which we learn the arguments of forty pageants or geſticulations, repreſenting all the hiſtories of both the Old and New Teſtament, from the creation to St. MATTHIAS the apoſtle. Among the latter we find *The Annunciation*, *The Nativity*, *The Viſitation*, *The Reſurrection*, and *The Aſcenſion*; Nay, *The Aſſumption*, and *Laſt Judgment*. All theſe were performed in a ſtyle, of which we ſhall by and by ſee ſome ſpecimens, infinitely unworthy and beneath the ſacred ſubjects they treated; a circumſtance which will clearly ſhew that theſe myſteries were performed very early when we compare them to thoſe written by BALE, SANDYS, and others who wrote in the ſixteenth century.

Theſe various performers were called waſtors,

maſter-rimours, minſtrels, and players of interludes, who had overrun the kingdom and reached even to WALES; and it was enacted that none of theſe, nor any other vagabonds, ſhould be ſuſtained or ſuffered in the land of WALES or elſewhere, to make commoiths or gatherings upon the people; by which it may be underſtood that they gave notice to all within ſuch a diſtrict that they performed for money. Among the appellation, other vagabonds, were, probably, included fencers, bearwards, and mummers; which laſt deſcription at different times have been known to infeſt the kingdom. Their cuſtom was to dreſs themſelves in a groteſque manner and to dance, mimic, and ſhew tricks of legerdemain, all which the Engliſh had retained ever ſince the mimes of the Romans, for it is remarked that they went about maſqued and diſguiſed, and were frequently guilty of many lewd and outrageous diſorders.

This interdiction ſeems to have had ſome effect for a time; for we find here, as in FRANCE, when printing was known and books began to multiply, which was in the reign of HENRY the ſixth, literature became more refined, and the only deviation from the myſteries and moralities, except among ſuch as choſe to run the riſk of offending againſt the law, was a ſort of revival of the entremets; for we

ſcarcely ever hear of the reception of princes or noble perſons but that pageants on ſtages erected in the open ſtreets, made a part of the entertainments. We gather from an ancient manuſcript at COVENTRY, called the old leet book, that on the feaſt of the exaltation of the Holy Croſs, MARGUERITTE, the queen of HENRY the ſixth, with her young ſon prince EDWARD, came there and was welcomed with many pageants and ſpeeches *.

In the next reign, as the ſame book inform us, the young prince EDWARD, ſon to king EDWARD the fourth, came to COVENTRY, and was received in the ſame manner †, and there were many more

---

* The characters in this curious ſpectacle were St. EDWARD, ſuppoſed to be the godfather of EDWARD the CONFESSOR, St. JOHN the Evangeliſt, and St. MARGARET. St. EDWARD tells Dame MARGUERITTE that he ſhall pray for her and his ghoſtly child; and he gives St. JOHN a ring that he may pray for her alſo; who upon this tells her that he'll be her bedeman, and that, to uſe his own words,

The vertuous voice of prince EDWARD ſhall dayly well encreaſe,
St. EDWARD, his godfader, and I ſhall pray therefore doubtleſe.

† Upon the ſecond occaſion, St. EDWARD had another very fine ſpeech, and ſo had St. GEORGE, and the book further tells us that "alſo, upon the Condite in the Croſs Cheping, was St. GEORGE "armed, and a king's daughter afore him with a lamb, and the "fader, and the moder, being in a towre aboven, beholding St. "GEORGE ſaving their daughter from the dragon, and the condite

entertainments of this deſcription in various parts of the kingdom that might be noticed; but I ſhall content myſelf with mentioning only one of a later date and in a more magnificent ſtyle. It was occaſioned by the marriage of prince ARTHUR, eldeſt ſon of king HENRY the ſeventh, to the princeſs CATHERINE of SPAIN, whoſe entrance into LONDON was very grand and ſplendid. The pageants were many and coſtly, and the ſpeakers repreſented various characters, ſuch as St. CATHERINE, St. URSULA, a Senator, Nobleſſe, Virtue, an Angel, king ALPHONSO, JOB, BOESIUS, and others *.

" renning wine in four places, and minſtralcy of organ playing, and " St. GEORGE having this ſpeech under writted.

O mighty GOD our all ſuccour celeſtiall,
Which this Royme has given in dower
To thy moder, and to me, GEORGE, protection perpetuall
It to defend from enimys fer and nere,
And, as this mayden defended was here,
By thy grace from this dragon's devour,
So, Lord, preſerve this noble prince and ever be his ſocour.

* When the ſpeaking was ended, " ſhe held on her way," ſays an old manuſcript, " tyll ſhe came unto the ſtandard in Chepe, " where was ordeyned the fifth pagend made like an kevyn, theryn " ſytting a perſonage repreſenting the fader of hevyn, being all " formyd of gold, and brennying beſſor his trone vii candyilis of " wax ſtandying in vii candylſtykis of gold, the ſaid perſonage beyng " environed wyth ſundry hyrarchies off angelis, and ſytting in a " cope of moſt rich cloth of tyſſu, garniſhyd wyth ſtoon and perle

Though theſe ſtrange faragoes wore very little how-

" in moſt ſumptuous wyſe. For again which ſaid pagend upon the
" ſouth ſyde of the ſtrete ſtood at that tyme in a hows wheryn that
" tyme dwellyd WILLIAM GEFFREY habyrdaſher, the king, the
" quene, my lydy the kingys moder, my lord of Oxynfford, wyth
" alſo certayn ambaſſadors of FRANCE lately ſent from the French
" king: and ſo paſſying the ſaid eſtatys, eyther guyving to other
" due and convenyent ſaluts and countenances, ſo ſone as hyr grace
" was approachid unto the ſaid pagend, the fadyr began his ſpeech
" as folowyth:

I am begynyng and ende, that made ech creature
My ſylfe, and for my ſylfe, but man eſpecially
Both male and female, made aftyr myn aun fygure,
Whom I joyned togydr in matrimony,
And that in paradyſe, declaring opynly
That men ſhall weddyng in my chyrch ſolempnize,
Fygurid and ſignifyed by the erthly paradyze.

In thys my chyrch I am allways recydent
As my chyeff tabernacle, and moſt choyſn place,
Among theſe goldyn candylſtikkis, which repreſent
My catholyk chyrch ſhynyng affor my face,
With lyght of feyth, wiſdom, doctryne. and grace,
And merveloufly eke enflamyd toward me
Wyth the extyngwible fyre of charyte.

Wherefore, my welbelovid dowthyr KATHARYN,
Syth I have made yow to myne awn ſemblance
In my chyrch to be maried, and your noble childryn
To reign in this land as in their enherytance,
Se that ye have me in ſpeciall remembrance:
Love me and my chyrch yowr ſpiritual modyr:
For ye diſpyſing that oon, dyſpyſe that othyr.

Look that ye walk in my precepts, and obey them well:

ever the reſemblance of plays, the interludes, which had been variouſly performed in defiance of the law, gave no mean idea of them; and theſe, when HENRY the eighth meditated the demolition of the monaſteries, received ſuch ſanction and encouragement from HEYWOOD; who, being the king's jeſter, was permitted to change the face of theatrical amuſements, as gave the myſteries, and moralities too, a ſevere ſhock, from which they never afterwards recovered.

It is true that in the reign of HENRY the eighth there was an act againſt mummers, but it was ſoon underſtood to extend only to ſuch as wore maſks; and, as the diſpoſition of the times was to ſecond

---

And here I give you the ſame blyſſyng that I
Gave my well beloved chylder of Iſraell;
Blyſſyd be the fruyt of your bely;
Yower ſubſtance and frutys I ſhall encreaſe and multyply;
Yower rebellious enimyes I ſhall put in yowr hand,
Encreaſing in honour both yow and youwr land.

Though the forgoing ſpeech is to the laſt degree profane and indecent, I could not refrain from giving it at length to ſhew what was tolerated in thoſe times, not only by the king, but by prieſts and philoſophers; for biſhop Fox had the management of this extraordinary ſpectacle, who, lord BACON tell us, was upon that occaſion a good ſurveyor of works, and a good maſter of ceremonies; and BACON himſelf ſays that "whoſoever had thoſe toys in com-"piling were not altogether pedantical."

every proceeding againſt prieſts, this very act ſerved to check the moralities and encourage the interludes; for the prieſts, or repreſenters of moralities, were now called ſtage players, and it is probable theſe performances would have been from that moment totally done away had not an attempt been made to revive them in the reign of queen MARY; who, however, gloomy and ſuperſtitious as ſhe was and willing to abet prieſts, did not much encourage them; nor, if ſhe had done ſo, could ſhe have been materially ſerviceable to them, her reign being ſo ſhort.

In the mean time, furniſhed with what HEYWOOD had written and procured, the interludes grew very much upon the public; till *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, written not long after the *Pageant* juſt now deſcribed, which, though low, was very nearly a regular comedy, fairly ſhaped theſe interludes into plays. But this was not all; for dramatic writers, who perfectly well knew their art began, upon the fall of the myſteries and moralities to appear. HENRY PARKER, ſon to ſir WILLIAM PARKER, is ſaid to have written ſeveral tragedies and comedies; JOHN HOKER wrote a comedy, called *Piſcator, or the Fiſher Caught;* but of theſe and others who ſucceeded them, I ſhall hereafter

give a particular account; in the mean time I ſhall purſue the hiſtory of the theatre generally.

As the darling wiſh of HENRY's heart was to eſtabliſh the Proteſtant religion, no wonder he did every thing in his power to ſuppreſs the influence of the Roman Catholics; and, as he well knew that by ſtriking at their dominion over the minds of the people by means of theſe amuſements he ſhould complete that reform which, perhaps, would not have been entirely effected by pulling down the monaſteries, he encouraged all ſuch plays as tended to promote his deſigns and interdicted all others; which very plainly appears by an act paſſed in the twenty-fourth year of his reign, called an Act of Parliament for promoting true Religion, in which there was a clauſe reſtraining all rimours, or players, from ſinging in ſongs, or playing in interludes, any thing that ſhould contradict the eſtabliſhed doctrines.

This ſtruck at the myſteries at once; which at all times, by repreſenting *The Creator*, *Our Saviour*, and the *Saints and Martyrs*, had been conſidered as profane and blaſphemous. The moralities were alſo weeded of all that had the ſame dangerous tendency, and, therefore, became ſo tame that the interludes, which were ſoon formed into tragedies

and comedies, gave the public a truer taſte for the ſtage.

The only evil to be apprehended from this was the increaſe of actors, and the inclination of the public to run after them. It appears evidently that dramatic writers who well knew their profeſſion lived at that time and ſoon after, for among others we are told of EDWARD FERRYS, who was celebrated in the time of EDWARD the ſixth, and "who," ſays his panegyriſt, "was a man of no leſs "mirth and felicity than JOHN HEYWOOD, but of "much more ſkill and magnificence in his metre; "and, therefore, wrote for the moſt part to the "ſtage in tragedy, and ſometimes in comedy, or "interludes; wherein he gave the king ſo much "good recreation, as he had thereby many good "rewards."

The actors now having full opportunity to repreſent any thing even upon profane ſubjects that was not immoral, exactly as it happened ſome time after in FRANCE, became numerous as they became celebrated, and would, perhaps, have eſtabliſhed the drama upon a firm and permanent footing, had not the gloom thrown over the nation during the ſhort but ſanguinary reign of MARY, forced them,

like ſo many timid hares to cover, to eſcape from thoſe inquiſitorial blood hounds, who, perhaps, might have thought proper to miſconſtrue their repreſentations of vice and folly into hereſy.

No ſooner, however, did the Engliſh horizon emancipate from that obſcurity with which it had been dimmed by the horrid and ſanguinary bonfires in Smithfield, than all the ſocial bleſſings that the people had ſo ardently panted for were ſought with double reliſh. The reform of HENRY, though meritorious, had been enforced; the reformation of ELIZABETH was voluntary. Never, perhaps, was there ſuch an epoch in the annals of the world. The whole nation was in ſmiles. Their ſovereign, born to bleſs and protect them, was received as a benediction from heaven. Oppreſſion was no more. Moderation was reſtored. Learning and the arts acknowledged their congenial ſoil, and the land in a few years received the poliſh of centuries.

ELIZABETH had too much good ſenſe to reſtrain plays. She did not chuſe, however, to let them run riot; but ſtill they were checked with a very ſparing hand, till the licentious uſe made of this lenity obliged her ſeriouſly to ſet about a reform in

the theatre as ſhe had done in the church. We are told that plays became the occaſion of much ſin and evil, that great multitudes of people of both ſexes, reſorted to thoſe plays; and that, on account of their being acted on Sundays, and feſtivals, the churches were forſaken, and the playhouſes thronged.

We are further told that great inns were uſed for this purpoſe which had ſecret chambers and places, as well as open ſtages and galleries; that in thoſe places maids, and the children of good citizens, were inveigled and allured to ſecret and illicit intercourſe; that theſe players uttered unchaſte and unworthy ſentiments, and were guilty of many other enormities. In ſhort, after the playhouſes were tacitly permitted, in proceſs of time they became little better than brothels. It was, therefore, thought expedient firſt to ſuppreſs plays entirely; but, as it was evident that amuſements of this nature upon a well regulated plan, might be rendered a benefit to ſociety inſtead of an evil, the lord mayor, ſir JAMES HAWES, by the command of the queen, iſſued an act of common council to this effect:

1. That no play ſhould be openly enacted within the liberty of the city wherein ſhould be uttered any words, examples, or doings of unchaſtity, ſe-

dition, or ſuch like unfit and uncomely matter, under pain of forfeiture of five pounds for every ſuch offence.

2. That no inn-keeper, tavern-keeper, or other perſon whatſoever within the ſaid liberties ſhould permit ſuch play to be performed within his houſe, or yard, which ſhould not firſt be peruſed and allowed by the lord mayor and court of aldermen.

3. That no perſons ſhould be permitted to perform but ſuch as were allowed and approved of by the lord mayor and court of aldermen.

4. All ſuch perſons to be bound in a penalty to the chamberlain of LONDON.

5. No play to be performed on any Sunday, or holiday, under the penalty of five pounds.

6. All performers allowed, approved of, and licenced as aforeſaid, to pay for the uſe of the poor in the city hoſpitals, ſuch ſums as the lord mayor and the court of aldermen ſhould approve of, or otherwiſe loſe their licence.

7. All ſums levied to be applied as above, for

which, upon refuſal, the chamberlain of LONDON might ſue in the mayor's court.

Theſe laws, which were made in 1574, were not ſtrictly obſerved; for the licentiouſneſs of plays encreaſed, and they were thought dangerous to religion, to the morals of the people, and to the ſtate. The theatres were ſo crouded that they were ſuppoſed to promote infection in times of confluent ſickneſs, therefore, after much debate upon the ſubject they were wholly ſuppreſſed.

Upon a repreſentation, however, of the queen's players and the players of noblemen and gentlemen, it was again permitted that they might hold themſelves in readineſs to play at weddings, and other feſtivals; at private houſes, or the lodgings of any nobleman, gentleman or citizen, where no collection of money was to be made from the audience, but not in public aſſemblies; but this toleration was ſoon extended again in favour of the queen's players; who were, however, to be reſtricted to the laws formerly iſſued in the mayoralty of ſir JAMES HAWES.

They were, however, forbid to commence their entertainments till the deaths ſhould be for twenty days together under fifty a week, and they were im-

mediately to leave off when they ſhould again amount to more than that number; all which was under an idea as before that the crouds at the theatres promoted infection. No plays were to be performed on a Sunday, or a holiday till after evening prayer, nor then after dark; nor to continue longer than to give the auditors time to return home before ſun ſet, or at leaſt before dark; and this indulgence at laſt was extended to the queen's players, but no more of them were to enjoy it than thoſe whoſe names were notified in the lord treaſurer's letters to the lord mayor, and the juſtices of MIDDLESEX and SURRY, and even thoſe her majeſty's players were forbid to divide themſelves into different companies; and for breaking any of thoſe orders their toleration was to ceaſe.

But all this was not ſufficient to keep them within bounds; for their plays were ſometimes ſo offenſive to virtue and morality, and ſo full of abuſe of different perſons that they were now and then ſtopt and prohibited; till, at length, they ſo completely ſet the laws at defiance that HART, the mayor, in 1589, complained to the lord treaſurer, and by his authority, as there were many companies belonging to noblemen, ſent for all the players in town without exception and forbid them to perform till further orders.

Theſe further orders were, however, very ſoon iſſued, for there were preſently three eſtabliſhed theatres, which were known by the names of the Theatre, the Fortune, and the Curtine, where we are told they performed comedies, tragedies, interludes, and hiſtories, both true and feigned; and it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe that after this laſt prohibition they pretty well conformed to the regulations enjoined them, for only eight years afterwards an act paſſed in which are theſe words.

"That all perſons that be or utter themſelves "to be procters, procurers, patent gatherers, or "collectors for goals, priſons or hoſpitals, or fencers, bearwards, common players of interludes "or minſtrels wandering abroad (other than players "of interludes belonging to any baron of this "realm, or any other honourable perſonage of "greater degree, to be authorized to play under "the hand and ſeal of ſuch baron or perſonage) "all juglers, tinkers, pedlars, and petty chapmen "wandering abroad, &c. Theſe ſhall be adjudged "and deemed rogues, vagabonds, and ſturdy beggars, and puniſhed as ſuch."

I have given the ſpirit of the whole clauſe to ſhew in what company ſtrolling actors were placed. The exemption in favour of the actors retained by

barons and higher perſons, clearly went to all thoſe who performed in LONDON; and, as we know not of any further prohibition, owing, of courſe, to the very rapid improvement of the ſtage under that galaxy of merit which appeared about this time to enlighten literature, no wonder it ſoon attained ſuch perfection as claſſed the Engliſh theatre infinitely forwarder than any other in the world.

CHAP. VII.

MYSTERIES AND MORALITIES.

Both for the ſake of hiſtorical intelligence and to gratify particular curioſity, I ſhall now look after the myſteries, moralities, and interludes, and ſhew in what way by graduating from religion to mythology, from mythology to allegory, and from allegory to nature, they at laſt improved into tragedies and comedies.

Having given ſo particular an account of the nature of the myſteries and moralities in France, it will be leſs neceſſary to dwell upon thoſe that were performed early in England. They may, however, here as there, be diſtinguiſhed into miracles, ſuch as were anathematized in France by Sulli, and brought forward in England by Geffroi, myſteries, which were performed by the Confraternity of the Paſſion, and the boys of St. Paul's ſchool, and moralities which were improve-

ments introduced by the Engliſh and French ſociety of clerks.

For proof of the miracles and that they obtained very early, we have not only *The Miracle of St. Catherine*, by GEFFROI, but accounts of others that were performed in different parts of the kingdom, anſwering exactly to RABELAIS's ſtory of VILLON, who the reader may remember had a curious adventure with the *Cordeliers* of POITOU. We are told of *Guary Miracles* which were performed in CORNWALL, and that many people flocked from great diſtances to ſee them, "for," ſays the author, who wrote in the reign of ELIZABETH, and was then giving an account of what he conſidered as antiquities, "they had therein devils and devices "as well to delight the eye as the ear."

Theſe guary miracles, one of which was called *The Creation of the World*, and another *Mount Calverie*, were performed upon the principles of the original Grecian amphitheatre, in temporary buildings formed in the open fields, the diameter of the incloſure being generally about fifty feet; and, it is extremely probable, the cuſtom being certainly very ancient, this might be the kind of theatre ſpoken of ſo confidently and in ſo unqualified a

manner at the time when, according to BOADICEA, NERO introduced fiddling into BRITAIN.

As to the myſteries, the very titles of them prove that they came from the ſame ſource whence our neighbours derived theirs. *The Paſſion of Our Saviour*, which the French confeſs to have been written ſo early that they know not with whom it originated; *The Conception*, *The Incarnation*, and others, to a very large number, ſhew ſufficiently we were not behind hand in theſe religious farces. There are a great many of them extant, ſome few of which it will be neceſſary to touch upon; but, as it would clog up the narrative to ſeek for thoſe of which we cannot poſſibly know any thing except by conjecture, it will be better at once to come to ſuch as have been acknowledged by well known authors, but who after all appear to have drawn them from a very remote ſource.

Of theſe authors one of the moſt reſpectable is BALE. He was born in 1495, in SUFFOLK, and at twelve years old went to the monaſtery of Carmelites at NORWICH. He afterwards ſtudied at Hulme Abbey in NORTHUMBERLAND, and was from thence removed to CAMBRIDGE. He became a Proteſtant, and was in conſequence perſecuted by the Roman Catholics, but he was protected by lord CROMWELL.

However, on that nobleman's death, he took ſhelter in HOLLAND, where he wrote, or probably tranſlated, moſt of his dramatic productions. He was recalled in the reign of EDWARD the ſixth, and given the living of BISHOP'S STOKE, in HAMPSHIRE. He was afterwards named to the See of OSSORY, where he ſtrenuouſly exerted himſelf to reform his prieſts and aboliſh maſs; in conſequence of which ſome of his ſervants were murdered, and his own death was plotted. He, therefore, made his eſcape in a ſmall boat and was taken by the captain of a Dutch man of war, who ſtript him of all his money and effects. From HOLLAND he retired to SWITZERLAND, where he continued during the reign of queen MARY. When ELIZABETH came to the throne, he returned to ENGLAND, but could never be prevailed upon to return to his ſee, but preferred rather being a prebend of CANTERBURY, where he died in 1563, the year before SHAKESPEAR was born.

BALE wrote ſeventeen dramatic pieces, of which thoſe under are the titles *Of Gods Promiſes*, *The Baptiſm of Chriſt*, *The Temptation*, *Chriſt when he was twelve Years Old*, *Of the Lord's Supper*, *Of the Paſſion of Chriſt*, *Of the Reſurrection*, *Of Lazarus raiſed from the Dead*, *Of Simon the Leper*, are myſteries; *The Treachery of the Papiſts*, *The Im-*

postures of Thomas Becket, Against those who adulterate the Word of God, and *The Corruptions of the Divine Laws*, are moralities; *Upon both Marriages of the King, Against Momuses and Zoiluses, Of John of England*, and *The Image of Love*, are plays.

All these performances, except three of the mysteries, are lost to the world. These, however, are pretty well preserved, and, as I shall presently instance in one of them that BALE was a man of sound learning, and by no means for his time a bad poet, we have great reason to believe that his plays were greatly superior to that insufferable nonsense *Gammer Gurton's Needle*—which, by the way, though execrably written, is a perfect play, and not without humour—or any of those other faragoes which the human mind can hardly afford belief, were written only forty years before SHAKESPEAR's productions began to illumine literature.

The mystery I allude to is entitled, *A tragedy or interlude manyfesting the chefe promises of God unto man by all ages in the old lawe, from the fall of Adam to the incarnacyon of Christ.* This piece holds out a positive proof that BALE, and therefore, of course, other writers of that time, well knew the ancients, for it is not in five acts, a number which, if we are well informed, the ancients never used but

ſeven acts in which their pieces were often written; and to make the ſimilitude more perfect, each act finiſhes with a chorus performed as the choruſes of the ancients were by voices and inſtruments; the aggregate length alſo as well as the proportion of the different diviſions is exactly managed upon the Greek model, for their tragedies in ſeven acts do not contain more matter than is generally found in three acts of any Engliſh tragedy. The *Oedipus Tyrannus* of SOPHOCLES, which is one of the longeſt of antiquity, has not ſo many lines by two hundred and fifty, including the choruſes, as one of our ſhorteſt *.

* ARISTOTLE, who ſtole as judiciouſly as VOLTAIRE, obſerves by way of a diſcovery in the words of PLATO, by the bye, who would probably have told us with great ſimplicity that the obſervation had been long an axiom, that an action ſhould conſiſt of beginning, middle, and end, and this, no doubt, is certainly true of all literary compoſitions whatever, from an epigram to an epic poem. The ancients, therefore, not becauſe it was ARISTOTLE's advice, for many of them wrote before him, in general either divided their plays into three acts or ſix; but, as the middle action was ſometimes intricate, for from its nature it ought to involve the piece in that perplexity which leaves the ſpectator in doubt as to how it ſhall finiſh, they took the third, fourth and fifth acts to have a wide field, by which means the firſt and ſecond were found fully ſufficient for the firſt action which opens the plot and excites the ſpectators curioſity, and the ſixth and ſeventh for relieving him from that pleaſant embarraſſment into which the middle action has worked upon his mind, by a gradual, a happy, and a natural cataſtrophe. It is on this account they totally rejected five acts which the French and the Engliſh

As to the writing of this piece it is crude enough, but as it is full of thoſe beautiful ſentiments which every where pervade the ſcriptures, and evidently written by a good man and a philoſopher, it cannot by any means be conſidered as an indifferent performance; at the ſame time there is ſomething ſhocking in introducing the Creator threatening ADAM, commanding NOAH, bleſſing ABRAHAM, inſtructing MOSES, promiſing DAVID, encouraging ISAIAH and ſanctifying JOHN the Baptiſt, and yet the whole forms a complete plot beginning with original ſin and finiſhing with man's redemption.

It is very probable, as I hinted before, that this piece was a tranſlation, for I now ſhall ſpeak of another which I have by me as it was originally printed with a preface and dedication, a good deal illuſtrative of this probable fact that moſt of the ancients tranſlated, or imitated from ſomething ſtill more ancient. This piece is a myſtery written by SANDYS, and called *Chriſt's Paſſion.*

---

have adopted, becauſe it was recommended by HORACE. Reaſon, however, who after all knows more than all the critics who ever wrote or cavilled, which is the ſame thing, ſays that if there are three diſtinct actions there ſhould be no more than three diſtinct diviſions, and if the middle, in point of intereſt, ſhould require to be more heightened than the reſt, give the ſecond act a little extenſion, and there is an end of the buſineſs. If any ſhould doubt this let him reconcile himſelf by reading the operas of METASTASIO.

SANDYS, who we are told was a very accomplished gentleman, was youngeſt ſon of EDWIN, archbiſhop of YORK, and born in 1577, this myſtery, therefore, that he tranſlated was of courſe never performed, but I mention it to ſhew the antiquity of that kind of ſpectacle. In his dedication, which is to the king, he ſpeaks of it as coming immediately to him from the pen of GROTIUS, and to GROTIUS from APOLLINARIUS and NAZIANZEN, two ancient fathers of the primitive church. In this preface are theſe words *:

"The tragedy of *Chriſt's Paſſion* was firſt written in "Greek by APOLLINARIUS, of LAODICEA, biſhop "of HIEROPOLIS, and after by GREGORY NAN-"ZIANZEN." Though this now extant in his, is, by

* I know of nothing ſo hurtful to literature as the preſent faſhion of ſuppreſſing prefaces and dedications; in which writers always expreſs their ſtrongeſt and happieſt thoughts. There are hundreds of inſtances that when literary compoſitions become the property of all mankind, the reputation of authors is ſacrificed to the profit of the bookſellers. Compreſſion is become as much the ſtudy of Paternoſter Row as the theatre, and every nerve is ſtrained to cram the author at one place into a nutſhell, and at the other into a pocket volume. The prefaces and dedications of DRYDEN are full of beautiful proſe conveying intereſting and elegant inſtruction. The mind of a great man like this, developed in a ſucceſſion of opinions, the reſult of his feeling and the confirmation of his judgment, is a treaſure of which the world ought not to be deprived.

ſome, aſcribed to the former; by others, accounted ſuppoſititious as not agreeing with his ſtrain in the reſt of his poems: which might alter that particular upon the imitation of EURIPIDES. But HUGO GROTIUS, of late, hath tranſcended all on this argument: whoſe ſteps afar off I follow.

As this piece, though much more irregular as to its conduct, is better written than that of BALE, I ſuſpect it to have been of greater antiquity, eſpecially as this is the ſubject which the French are not able to trace to its ſource. Thus, to reconcile this apparent ſoleciſm, the plot, which is crude and incongruous, has remained without alteration, and the ſtyle, by getting into different hands has acquired a brighter poliſh. The ſubject is much better calculated for repreſentation than the other, the characters, one excepted, being leſs revolting. The choruſes, however, which are chiefly performed by Jewiſh women, are not managed according to any rule. They are not like thoſe before ÆSCHYLUS, which contained the main action, nor after when they only relieved the main action. They ſeem rather what SOPHOCLES introduced, and EURIPIDES afterwards altered; for, though they are not primary objects, they certainly were compoſed of characters which had relation to the principal

intereſt of the piece. I mention this to ſhew that all theſe writers had the ancients in view in every thing.

SANDYS, however, ſo far conformed to the faſhion of the times in which he wrote as to adopt five acts in preference to any other given number; and, if the prodigious length of the ſpeeches did not tire the reader intolerably, and more the ſpectator, the whole being little more than a ſucceſſion of monologues, the hiſtorical facts attending upon that event and the ſituation of the characters, particularly of PILATE, who is made to feel as a man while he acts as a governor, would give the piece a conſequence and an intereſt that might not diſgrace later and more perfect productions.

We can trace theſe myſteries to a variety of authors, moſt of whom appeared to have tranſlated their plays from either the Greek, Latin, Italian, French, or German; but, as the ſubject requires to be no farther treated than merely to prove the exiſtence and antiquity of theſe amuſements, I ſhall be as brief as poſſible.

JHAN PARFRE wrote, or tranſlated, in 1512, a myſtery called *Candlemas Day; or, the Killing of*

the Children of Iſrael, RADCLIFF wrote *Dives and Lazarus*, *Job's Affliction*, *The Burning of Sodom*, *The Delivery of Suſannah*, and *The Fortitude of Judith*. WAGER lived in the reign of ELIZABETH, and is called a learned clerk. He wrote *The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalen*. A myſtery, or religious tragedy, was tranſlated from the Italian of BOSSENTINUS by HENRY CHEEKE, called *Freewill*, where is ſet forth, in manner of tragedy, the deviliſh devices of the Popiſh religion. PEELE, of whom it will be neceſſary preſently to ſpeak, wrote *The Love of King David and Fair Bathſheba*, with the tragedy of *Abſalom*; and GOLDING tranſlated *Abraham ſacrificing his Son Iſaac* from BEZA.

Many more authors might be named, and many more pieces, which, though the authors are unknown, were entered at Stationer's Hall. There is ſcarcely, however, a play but manifeſts from ſome circumſtance or other that it came from ſomething written antecedent to the time in which it appeared; and, as I ſhall hereafter be able more particularly to aſcertain the origin of the moralities, and the old tragedies and comedies, and we ſhall then find from circumſtances a full confirmation of this fact, it may not be amiſs to take leave of the myſteries by giving a ſhort ſpecimen of their language.

In BALE's myſtery of *God's Promiſes* is the following colloquy between the CREATOR and ADAM. I take the paſſage at hazard.

Adam primus homo.

Mercyfull Father, thy pytiefull grace extende
To me carefull wretche, whych have me ſore abuſed,
Thy precept breakynge. O Lord, I mynde to amende,
If thy great goodneſſe wolde now have me excuſed,
Moſt heavenlye Maker, let me not be refuſed.
Nor caſt from thy ſyght for one pore ſynnefull cryme,
Alas I am frayle, my whole kynde ys but ſlyme.

Pater cœleſtis.

I wott it is ſo, yet art thou no leſſe faultye,
Than thu haddyſt bene made of matter moch more worthye.
I gave the reaſon, and wytte to underſtande
The good from the evyll. And not to take on hande,
Of a brayneleſſe mynde, the thynge whych I forbad the.

Adam primus homo.

Soch heavye fortune hath chefelye chaunced me,
For that I was left to myne owne lyberte.

Pater cœleſtis.

Then thu art blameleſſe, and the faulte thu layeſt to me.

Adam primus homo.

Naye all I aſcribe to my own imbecyllyte.
No faulte in the Lorde, but in my infirmyte,
And want of repect in ſoche gyftes as thu gaveſt me.

Pater cœleſtis.

For that I put the at thyne owne lyberte,
Thu oughteſt my goodneſſe to have in more regarde.

Adam primus homo.

Avoyde it I cannot, thu layeſt to me ſo harde.
Lorde, now I perceyve what power is in man,
And ſtrengte of hymſelfe, when thy ſwete grace is abſent.

He muſt nedes but fall, do he the beſt he can,
And daunger hymſelfe, as apereth evydent;
For I ſynned not ſo longe as thu wert preſent;
But whan thu wert gone, I fell to ſynne by and by,
And the dyſpleaſed. Good Lorde I axe the mercy.

Pater cœleſtis.

Thu ſhalt dye for it, with all thy poſteryte.

Adam primus homo.

For one faulte, good Lorde, avenge not thyſelfe on me.
Who am but a worme, or a fleſheyle vanyte.

Pater cœleſtis.

I ſaye thu ſhalt dye, with thy whole poſteryte.

Adam primus homo.

Yet mercy ſwete Lorde, yf anye mercy maye be.

Pater cœleſtis.

I am immutable, I maye change no decre.
Thu ſhalt dye (I ſay) without anye remedye.

Adam primus homo.

Yet gracyouſe Father, extende to me thy mercye,
And throwe not awaye the worke whych thu haſt create
To thyne own image, but avert from me thy hate.

Pater cœleſtis.

But art thu ſorye from bottom of thy hart?

Adam primus homo.

Thy dyſpleaſure is to me moſt heavye ſmart,

Pater cœleſtis.

Than wyll I tell the what thu ſhalt ſtycke unto,
Lyfe to recover, and my good faver alſo.

Adam primus homo.

Tell it me, ſwete Lorde, that I maye theraſter go.

Pater cœleſtis.

Thys yş my covenaunt to the and all thy ofsprynge.

For that thu haſt bene deceyved by the ſerpent,
I wyll put hatred betwixt hymn for hys doynge,
And the women kynd. They ſhall herafter dyſſent;
Hys ſede with her ſede ſhall never have agrement;
Her ſede ſhall preſſe downe hys heade unto thu grounde.
Slee hys ſuggeſtyons, and hys whole power confounde.
Cleave to thys promyſe, with all thy inwarde powre,
Fyrmelye encloſe it in thy remembraunce faſt;
Folde it in thy faythe with full hope day and houre,
And thy ſalvacyon it wyll be at the laſt.
That ſede ſhall clere the of all thy wyckedneſſe paſt,
And procure thy peace, with moſt hygh grace in my ſyght.
Se thu truſt to it, and holde not the matter lyght.

In SANDYS's tragedy of *Chriſt's Paſſion* will be found this paſſage, the firſt that came in my way.

PILATE.

A ſight ſo full of pity may aſſwage
The ſwiftly ſpreading fire of popular rage.
Look on this ſpectacle? his arms all o're
With laſhes gall'd, deep dy'd in their own gore!
His ſides exhauſted, all the reſt appears
Like that fictitious ſcarlet which he wears!
And for a crown, the wreathed thorns infold
His bleeding brows! with grief his grief behold!

JEWS.

Away with him: from this contagion free
Th' infected earth, and nail him on a tree.

PILATE.

What! crucifie your king!

JEWS.

dominion can
No rival brook. His rule a law to man,
Whom ROME adores, we readily obey:
And will admit of none but CÆSAR's ſway.

He CÆSAR's right uſurps, who hopes to aſcend
The Hebrew throne. Thy own affairs intend.
Doſt thou diſcharge thy maſter's truſt, if in
Thy government a preſident begin
So full of danger, tending to the rape
Of majeſty? Shall treaſon thus eſcape?

PILATE.

The tumult ſwells: the vulgar and the great
Joyn in their votes with contributed heat.
Whoſe whiſperings ſuch a change of murmur raiſe,
As when the riſing wind's firſt fury ſtrays
'Mong wave-beat rocks; when gatherings clouds deform
The face of heaven, whoſe wrath begets a ſtorm;
The fearful pilot then diſtruſts the ſkies,
And to the neareſt port for refuge flies.
To theſe rude clamours they mine ears inure;
Such ſharp diſeaſes crave a ſudden cure.
You, my attendants, hither quickly bring
Spot-purging water from the living ſpring.
Thou liquid chryſtal from pollution clear;
And you, my innocent hands, like record bear,
On whom theſe cleanſing ſtreams ſo purely run;
I voluntarily have nothing done.
Nor am I guilty, though he guiltleſs dye;
Yours is the crime; his blood upon you lie.

JEWS.

Reſt thou ſecure. If his deſtruction ſhall
Draw down celeſtial vengeance, let it fall
Thick on our heads, in puniſhment renew:
And ever our diſperſed race purſue.

From theſe ſpecimens the reader will eaſily form an idea not only of the two writers but of the manner in which theſe ſubjects were generally treated. BALE's myſtery, written clearly by a divine, was

one of that deſcription performed by the prieſts. SANDYS gave himſelf the latitude of a poet, and, therefore, though his piece is on a ſacred ſubject, the characters ſuit the laity. This was one ſhadow of that diſtinction by which the myſteries gradually changed into moralities, a ſpecies of entertainment, however, intolerably dull though frequently well written; for, though allegory requires the powers of a poet, example alone enforces the practice of virtue from the ſtage. A metaphor may convince me through the medium of imaginary characters that clemency is a beautiful virtue, but let me be ſhewn an actual inſtance of it by ſome circumſtance like the introduction of TITUS, and I inſtantly ſee not only its beauty but its practicability.

The moralities were generally written to ſerve ſome temporary purpoſe. Sometimes they enforced public opinions, as the comedy of *Good Order*, written by SKELTON; ſometimes to promote obedience and conformity to the laws like that called *The New Cuſtom*, the author not known, written expreſsly to vindicate and promote the Reformation; ſometimes, eſpecially when they were written for families, they recommended an attention to the ordinary purſuits of life, and illuſtrated the advantages of ſocial duty; of this claſs were *The Diſobedient Child*, by INGELAND, a very early writer,

and *Acolaſtus; or, the Prodigal Son*, by PALSGRAVE. The ground work of which pieces we have ſeen in the early part of the French ſtage particularly *Acolaſtus*, which came from the celebrated play of RUTEBEUF, from which ſo many authors have pillaged, and among them VOLTAIRE. PALSGRAVE, however, who was chaplain to HENRY the eighth, ſeems to have had a Latin play written by FULLONIUS, in his idea and in his ſtyle he endeavoured to imitate both PLAUTUS and TERENCE.

Others of theſe moralities promoted learning, and the principles of education, ſuch are the nature of the *Four Elements*, ſuppoſed to be written by RASTALL, which among other branches of inſtruction illuſtrates many points of natural philoſophy and necromantia, compiled by SKELTON, firſt in Greek, afterwards tranſlated into Latin, and then into Engliſh, for the uſe of thoſe who might wiſh to learn different languages.

The laudable drift, therefore, of theſe performances, of which theſe may ſerve as a few proofs, is very apparent, but the world wanted to be amuſed as well as taught, and this led to the introduction of plays; which, being undertaken by ſcholars perfectly well acquainted with the ancients, we inſtantly obſerve, whatever other requiſites they may want,

the early comedies and tragedies are aſtoniſhingly regular for the time.

But to dwell a little longer upon the moralities. Theſe ſtrange repreſentations were ſo managed, that, though they conſiſted of a great variety of characters, they might be performed by four or five perſons. In one of them called *All for Money,* which was deſcribed as "a moral and pityful comedy "plainly repreſenting the manners of men and the "faſhion of the world," the characters are Theology, Science, Art, Money, Adulation, Godly Admonition, Miſchievous Help, Pleaſure, Preſſed for Pleaſure, Sin, Swift to Sin, Virtue, Humility, Charity, All for Money, Damnation, Satin, Pride, Gluttony, Learning with Money, Learning without Money, Money without Learning, Neither Money nor Learning, Moneyleſs, Moneyleſs and Friendleſs, Nychol, Gregory, Graceleſs, Mother Crook. Judas, Dives, William, and the Two Wives; but as not more than two of theſe characters, or at moſt three, were ever on the ſtage at once, and when they generally diſappeared they were ſeen no more, ſeveral parts were taken by one perſon without any injury to the piece.

I have inſtanced here one of the lateſt, or pur-

poſe to ſhew that, as the myſteries became partly moralities, ſo at laſt the moralities became partly plays; for Nychol, Gregory, Graceleſs, Mother Crook, &c. are not allegorical but real characters. On the contrary in thoſe of an earlier date, one of which is called *Every Man*, we find the Creator in company with Death, Fellowſhip, Kindred, Knowledge, Strength, and Beauty. Before this morality we find the following advertiſement:

" Here begynneth a treatyſe how the hye Fa-
" ther of Heaven ſendeth dethe to ſomon every
" creature to come and gyve a counte of theyr
" lyves in this worlde; and is in maner of a moralle
" playe." But it is extremely difficult to trace the moralities to their ſource. RASTALL, a famous typographer from 1500 onward to 1536, when he died, either wrote, revived, or tranſlated many of them. All thoſe to which no authors' names are affixed, it is natural to ſuppoſe are of this deſcription. SKELTON, poet lauret to HENRY the eighth, is the earlieſt name we can find, who, beſides thoſe that have been noticed, wrote *Magnificence*, a goodly interlude and a mery. The *Negromanſir*, printed in 1504, and the comedy of *Virtue*.

The ſtory of the *Negromanſir*, which was performed before HENRY the ſeventh and his nobles

on Palm Sunday, greatly to their edification no doubt, was the trial of SIMONY, which is ſuppoſed to be a female. One of the characters quotes SENECA and St. AUSTIN, and tells this lady to offer the Devil a bribe. The Devil, who enters with a large beard, rejects her offer with the utmoſt indignation, and ſwears that ſhe ſhall be fried and roaſted in ſulphur with MAHOMET, PONTIUS PILATE, the traitor JUDAS, and king HEROD. The laſt ſcene is a view of Hell where the devil dances with the Negromancer till, after tripping up his heels, he leaves him in aſtoniſhment, and diſappears in ſmoke and ſulphur.

After SKELTON we have MEDWALL, chaplain to MERTON, cardinal and archbiſhop of CANTERBURY, who wrote a morality called *Nature*; GASCOIGNE, who tranſlated a morality from ARIOSTO, called *Suppoſes*, and wrote another called The *Glaſſe of Government*; WOODS, who produced The *Conflict of Conſcience*; TARLETON, author of The *Seven Deadly Sins*; and others beſides thoſe of BALE already mentioned. But there are many publiſhed by RASTALL, which are ſuppoſed to have been of a very early date indeed; among theſe may be reckoned *Gentlyneſe and Nobylite*, *Impacyente Poverte*, *Manhood*, *and Wiſdome*, *The Marriage of Wit and Science*, and ſeveral others.

Perhaps it may be wrong to dwell ſo minutely on the ſubject of theſe repreſentations. Many of which are miſerable traſh, and the beſt but fanciful and fantaſtic rhapſodies, calculated, one ſhould think, more for drolls and puppet-ſhews than to make up the delight of kings and courts; but, as they ſerved to inſinuate morality under this homely and groteſque form, which alone the people were willing to approve, they ſo far fulfilled the purpoſes of the ſtage, and ſobered the public mind into that degree of diſcrimination which taught the Engliſh to admire perfection on the theatre ſooner than any other nation after the Greeks.

It is impoſſible to conceive any thing fuller of impiety than the myſteries taken literally; but it muſt be remembered that the oſtentatious ceremonies of the church which have pretty well kept pace with them have enſured an attention to the church itſelf, which perhaps would have been vainly enjoined by admonition, or compelled by ſeverity. What wonder then the prieſts ſhould act in concert with the players? It cannot alſo be denied that private duty, enforced by either the perſuaſions, or the menaces of a parent, or a preceptor, ſeldom exhibits any other than a melancholy proſpect of ſucceſs; but, when inſtruction wears the lovely form and aſſumes the alluring garb of pleaſure, youth is flattered into

duty, and cheated into virtue. The ſtern vizor of rigour falls off and the face of reaſon appears chearful and complacent.

It is on this account, awkward, rude and booriſh as they have managed it, I cannot find reaſon to doubt that the world at all times, and this of courſe as well as every other country, have adopted ſome inſinuating mode ſimilar to this to enſure by mildneſs an attention to ſocial intercourſe and mutual intereſt which menace could never have effected; and, whether ſports, muſic, dancing, reciting, or ſinging of poetry, relating hiſtories, true, or invented, or any others of theſe numerous tubs with which human creatures, as well as whales, muſt be amuſed, have at any time prevented depredations, averted inſurrections, and ſecured the bounds of good fellowſhip, the whole has been ſtage effect, and, therefore, virtually an encouragement of the dramatic art.

Will it be inſiſted that if there had been no amuſements of that kind which we now call tragedies and comedies, the theatre, properly ſpeaking, would have had no exiſtence? No ſuch thing can be advanced. Myſteries and moralities were tragedies and comedies as far as they went; for, though the mind accommodates itſelf better to imitate

virtue by a review of the actions of thoſe with whom hiſtory has brought us acquainted, or to ſhun folly through an expoſition of thoſe abſurdities apparent to us in the actions of our common acquaintance, yet the drift of the other amuſements was the ſame; the times, however, were not poliſhed enough to promulgate inſtruction in any other form, and, therefore, they held out ſymbol inſtead of certainty.

CHAP. VIII.

INTERLUDES AND REMARKS CONCERNING THEM AND THEIR AUTHORS.

THE term interlude is ſo indefinite, and has been ſo variouſly appropriated, that it has at times applied to every ſpecies of dramatic entertainment both ſacred and prophane. There can be no doubt but that its fair vernacular ſenſe is ſome farce, or other ſtage performance, introduced between intervals at feaſts; therefore, when it came to have a fixed and determinate ſignification, it had not the ſmalleſt reſemblance to what was originally underſtrood as interlude.

In companies it has been the cuſtom to give a ſong and a toaſt alternately; nay, in clubs we ſhall ſtill find telling ſtories, preaching Quakers ſermons, repeating ſcenes from plays, imitating puppets, dreſſing a fiſt like an old woman and make it apparently ſing a ſong in character, and a prodigious number of modes of mumming in this way. Theſe

are interludes as far as they go, and fairly give an idea of what were thoſe amuſements performed in little alehouſes which occaſioned the Vagrant Act of EDWARD the third.

Nothing, therefore, of the dramatic kind taken in this ſenſe is ſo ancient as intertude. The tragedies and comedies of the Greeks, as they have been conſidered according to their original ſenſe of religious and paſtoral, the Feſcennines of the Romans, the Jornadas of the Spaniards, the Canvaſſes of the Italians, the Sirventes and Tenſons of the French, and the irregular mixture of them all among the Engliſh, were interludes; a term meaning pieces performed theatrically to amuſe and inſtruct ſometimes large, and ſometimes ſelect companies; nor were they till HEYWOOD, and thoſe other authors about his time, conſidered in a fixed and diſtinct ſenſe ſignyifng a regular dramatic piece one ſhadow only from a play; for, as the myſteries promulgated religion through the medium of impiety, and the moralities taught ſocial duty by the perſonification of thoſe virtues men ought to imitate, and thoſe vices they ought to avoid, the interludes, ſuch as they were underſtood to be at that time, conſiſted of characters which really exiſted, who diſcourſed on ſubjects moſt proper to enforce the duties which prudence, reaſon, and even policy recommended.

So far they were dramatic entertainments, but ſtill they were not plays, for the moral was enforced by precept and not by example. A repreſentation of characters in real life which were immediately concerned in the intereſt of the action that was going forward, which, as they contributed to bring about the ends of juſtice and morality were rewarded, and which, as they thwarted and perverted thoſe ends were puniſhed, was a ſpecies of theatrical amuſement, then entirely unknown, though all the eſſential requiſites of it had been always the drift of whatever had been brought forward, yet will not this militate againſt any thing already here aſſerted, for it is impoſſible to contend that becauſe an art had not arrived to perfection it had not, therefore, been exerciſed.

It may not now be amiſs to blend with thoſe interludes ſome particulars concerning the men who wrote them, among whom the name of JOHN HEYWOOD ſtands moſt conſpicuous. He ſeems to have been a man of great wit and pleaſantry, and very well calculated to innovate as he did upon the myſteries and moralities; but, his mind being too excentric, and his genius too volatile to buckle to the trammels of a univerſity education, he neglected to poliſh thoſe talents which, nevertheleſs, he was cer-

tainly endowed with, and, therefore, probably he was not conſidered as a perſon of ſufficient conſequence to effect a complete reform.

His abilities were, however, held in conſiderable reſpect, and he became by his pleaſant and agreeable wit a great favourite with many eminent men of that time, and particularly with ſir THOMAS MORE, who delighted in his company, and introduced him to the princeſs MARY *, through whom he became the jeſter and ſo much the favourite of king HENRY the eighth, that he highly rewarded him ſays

---

* Sir THOMAS MORE, whoſe extraordinary talents, whoſe unſhaken rectitude, and whoſe brilliant wit and amiable manners, made him the admiration of the good and wiſe, and the envy of the deceitful and malignant; who ornamented the ſtate, dignified the laws, delighted ſociety, and gave a poliſh to manners; and who ſuffered death through the ingratitude of a maſter whom he had too honeſtly ſerved for his own ſafety. This ſir THOMAS MORE was both the patron of HEYWOOD, and the Mecænas of the age he lived in. The ſtage, however, was his moſt favourite object of protection, for he was himſelf an actor, and indulged this propenſity very early in life. MORE was educated in the family of Cardinal MERTON, biſhop of CANTERBURY, whoſe chaplain, MEDWALL, wrote moralities which were aſſiſted both by the pen and the acting of MORE, we are told that it was his cuſtom to mix with the players when he was not previouſly expected; and, let the ſubject be what it might, he made out his part extempore in ſo entertaining a manner that, not only the matter he delivered was the beſt in the piece, but as POLLONIUS ſays, "he was accounted the beſt actor."

an author, "for the mirth and quickneſs of his conceits."

HEYWOOD, however, was not a ſincere adherent of HENRY, for he was a bigotted Roman Catholic, and, therefore, in his heart attached himſelf cloſely to the intereſt of MARY; to whom, when the Proteſtants were burning in Smithfield, he uſed to relate facetious ſtories, even at the time when ſhe was on her death bed, by way of chaſing the gloom that naturally hung on her guilty mind for having wickedly ſacrificed ſo many martyrs; and thus we ſee the difference of the reward of a ſervile and accommodating ſervant and a noble and honourable one. HEYWOOD was carreſſed by HENRY for laughing at him in his ſleeve, and treating him with duplicity, while MORE whoſe honour nothing could impeach; and whoſe magnanimity nothing could diſmay, loſt his head in return for his fidelity.

After cajoling HENRY, crouching to EDWARD, and deifying MARY, HEYWOOD, fancying that the generoſity and honeſty of ſentiment, revived by ELIZABETH and the Proteſtant religion, might detect his hypocricy and ſo procure for him a merited puniſhment, thought it prudent to quit the kingdom. He died at MECHLIN, in BRABANT, about

1565, the year after SHAKESPEAR was born. His pieces, though they were called plays, are all interludes, ſuch as they have already defined. They were all of them publiſhed in 1533, and are ſix in number, beſides two others, called *Pindar of Wakefield*, and *Philotas*, which are attributed to him but not believed to be his.

HEYWOOD's ſix plays are, *A Play between Johan the Huſband, Tyb the Wife, and ſir Johan the Prieſt;* which ſeems to be taken from one of the Tales of BOCCACE, which is ludicrouſly imitated by LA FONTAINE. *A Mery Play between the Pardoner and the Friar, the Curate and Neighbour Prat. The Play called the Four P's; being a new and a very mery Interlude between a Palmer, a Pardoner, a Poticary, and a Pedlar. A Play of Genteelneſs and Nobility. A Play of Love. A Play of the Weather.*

Theſe interludes, for ſo they all are, manifeſt the character of the man who wrote them. They ſeem by very ſubtle reaſoning between certain perſonages to try the public opinion, and that under an idea of depicting local and temporary manners, of which CHAUCER's *Canterbury Tales* ſtand for the outline, and which ever were and ever will be virtually the ſame.

PALSGRAVE, who wrote *Acolaſtus*, was a man of very extenſive knowledge. He flouriſhed in the reigns of HENRY the ſeventh, and HENRY the eighth. He was born in London, and there received the firſt rudiments of learning. He was afterwards celebrated at CAMBRIDGE for logic and philoſophy; but his own country and his own language did not ſatisfy his thirſt after learning; he, therefore, went to FRANCE, where he became ſo admired, not only for his general talents but his proficiency in particular in the French tongue, which he gave a purity and an elegance to which the natives of FRANCE had till then been a ſtranger,* that when the treaty of marriage was on foot between LOUIS the twelfth and Princeſs MARY, ſiſter to HENRY the eighth, PALSGRAVE was pitched upon to teach her the French language. LOUIS, however, died very

* This is a very ſingular fact. PALSGRAVE was the firſt that reduced the French language to grammatical rules. His works which he publiſhed in LONDON, called *L'Eclairciſſement de la Language Francois*, is a very ingenious and ſenſible work; ſo much ſo, that many ingenious French authors have willingly acknowledged that all the elegance and ſpirit for which the French tongue is ſo celebrated, and which has made it ſo univerſal, would never have pervaded their language had they not received a promethean influence from Engliſh genius and judgment; and this generally applies to what I ſhall particularly inſiſt relative to plays; which certainly would not have come to any perfection ſo early as they did in FRANCE, had not the Engliſh authors, and particularly SHAKESPEAR, given them a merit and a perfection unknown to any nation ſince GREECE.

ſoon after his marriage, and PALSGRAVE attended MARY to ENGLAND; where, through her influence, he became ſo uſeful in teaching French to the Engliſh nobility, that he obtained good church preferment, and was made one of the chaplains in ordinary to HENRY the eighth. When PALSGRAVE was born, or at what time he died cannot now be traced; but the hiſtorical fact of the marriage between LOUIS and MARY, will ſhew that he was celebrated ſo early as 1514; and, as he did not publiſh his ingenious work on the French tongue till the year 1540, he muſt have run a pretty long career of favour and reputation.

HENRY PARKER, lord MORLEY, was born in the reign of HENRY the ſeventh. He was a voluminous author, and is ſaid to have written perfect tragedies and comedies, taking the ancients for his model; but, as dramatic pieces do not ſeem to have been forward enough for this, unleſs their perfection conſiſted only of their conſtruction and they were neglected for the traſh that, like *Gammer Gurton's Needle* they contained, it is more rational to ſuppoſe that the pieces of this author were interludes.

MORLEY, was a firm adherent of HENRY. He was one of thoſe barons who ſigned the memorable

letter to CLEMENT the ſeventh, threatening him with the loſs of his ſupremacy in ENGLAND unleſs he uſed every poſſible diſpatch to effect the king's divorce. The king did not fail to return this attention; for, when MORLEY had a diſpute with lord DACRE, of GILLESTAND, for precedence, he ſo backed his pretenſions that, though we are told MORLEY had not right on his ſide, thoſe pretenſions were confirmed by parliament. He is ſaid to have lived in honour and eſteem to a very advanced age, and to have enlightened that time with many works of celebrity.

RADCLIFF wrote both moralities and interludes; and began about 1538, at which time many of the monaſteries were deſtroyed, to grow celebrated for interludes, which, like thoſe of HEYWOOD, helped forward that toleration which HENRY had introduced. He took the Carmelite's houſe at HITCHIN, in HEREFORDSHIRE, and converted a part of it into a theatre, where his ſcholars acted Latin and Engliſh comedies that they might acquire confidence in public ſpeaking. Theſe pieces, by being written upon the model of the ancients, ſeem at leaſt ſome of them, to be nearer to plays than thoſe interludes written by HEYWOOD. The piece called *Chaucer's Melebee*, is ſaid to have been a perfect comedy. Their tendency, however, being always to

ſecond the king's views in his laudable determination to eſtabliſh the Proteſtant religion, RADCLIFF was greatly countenanced and encouraged, and he in conſequence lived reſpected, and died rich.

SKELTON, who among other interludes wrote *The Negromanſir*, of which we have already ſeen an account, was laureat both at OXFORD and CAMBRIDGE. He was promoted to the rectory of DISS, in NORFOLK; but, having more of the actor in him than the parſon, and being calculated rather to write plays than ſermons, he made the pulpit a vehicle for the moſt pointed ridicule and ſevere ſarcaſm; but this did not ſatisfy him. He wrote a prodigious number of ballads againſt the hypocricy of the prieſts, and particularly the mendicants, and for theſe irregularities he was ſuſpended by NYKKE, biſhop of NORWICH, a rigid man, from exerciſing the duties of his ſacred function.

This diſgrace, however, giving him notoriety, became only a ſpur to his frolickſome pegaſus, for he vented his ridicule more and with greater ſucceſs than ever. Scarcely any of the religious eſcaped him. At length he had cauſe to repent his temerity; for, having ſeverely attacked the dignity of WOLSEY, that powerful and vindictive miniſter determined to make him a ſevere example. SKELTON,

however, got an intimation of his intentions; and, before the officers of juſtice, who were in purſuit of him, had arrived to ſeize him, he took refuge in the ſanctuary of Weſtminſter Abbey, where he was kindly entertained by Abbot ISLIP, with whom he reſided till the day of his death, which happened in 1529.

JOHN BOURCHIER, lord BERNERS, appears to have been a good author, himſelf, and a patron of many of the wits of his time. He was deſcended from THOMAS, of WOODSTOCK, duke of GLOUCESTER. He was Knight of the Garter, and Conſtable of WINDSOR CASTLE under EDWARD the fourth, and became popular for quelling an inſurrection in CORNWALL and DEVONSHIRE, which was headed by MICHAEL JOSEPH, a blackſmith, in 1495, and this recommended him to the favour of HENRY the ſeventh.

He was a captain of the pioneers at the ſiege of THEROUENNE, under HENRY the eighth, by whom he was made Chancellor of the Exchequer for life. He was alſo Lieutenant of CALAIS and the MARCHES. He was appointed to conduct the Princeſs MARY into FRANCE on her marriage, at which time he became acquainted and wrote in con-

junction with PALSGRAVE, and what was very remarkable he enjoyed the confidence and continued in the favour of HENRY eighteen years. He wrote himself but one comedy called *Ite in Veneam*, but it was principally owing to his patronage that the ſtage boaſted the celebrity it poſſeſſed at the time of his death, which happened in 1532 *.

Of the reſt of the interlude writers, ſome of whom alſo wrote plays, there is nothing that can be collected remarkable enough to merit particular attention. WAGER, WAYER, WAPULL, UPTON, WOODS, PEELE, and others were writers of this claſs, and their interludes were generally controverſies concerning the reformation, which it may be eaſily conceived always tended to ſome concluſion in its favour.

Thus HENRY the eighth, who perſecuted prieſts, encouraged actors; and thus HEYWOOD and SKELTON were cunningly employed to enforce toleration and ſtrip off the maſk of hypocriſy from WOLSEY and his dependants. This will preſently

* From this nobleman, by his marriage with CATHERINE, the daughter of the duke of NORFOLK, is deſcended the preſent lady baroneſs BERNERS; whoſe right to that title had long lain in obſcurity, till, at length, it was clearly made out and recovered by PETER NEVE, eſq. NORROY.

ſhew us that plays, properly ſo called, by partaking more of rational manners, obtained no permanent reputation and decided character till the Proteſtant religion cleared away thoſe clouds of bigotry and ſuperſtition in which pure nature and fair truth had been ſhrouded and concealed. Interludes began the work, but it remained for plays to perfect it.

CHAP. IX.

PLAYS.

It is generally believed that *Gammer Gurton's Needle* was the firſt piece, poſſeſſing the requiſites of a play, that was performed in this kingdom. This, however, is a very doubtful conjecture, unleſs it be allowed that it was written many years before it came from the hands of biſhop Still, who is ſaid to have produced it when he was Maſter of Arts at Cambridge. A piece called *Dyccon the Bedlam*, which was entered at Stationers Hall in 1562, ſeems to have ſerved for the ground work of *Gammer Gurton*, and muſt have been originally written many years before, for ſuch incomprehenſible nonſenſe could never have been permitted ſo long after Skelton, John Heywood, Medwall, lord Morley, Palsgrave, and Jasper Heywood, produced pieces much better written; the laſt of whom tranſlated three tragedies from Seneca.

Still, however, though he ſeemed extremely

fond of preſerving as much of the nonſenſe as poſſible knew very well the true conſtruction of a perfect play; and, though the ridiculous ſtory he had to deal with was no more than GAMMER GURTON's looſing the needle with which ſhe was mending her huſband's breeches, the coil kept up by this terrible accident, and the intrigues of DICCON, by which they are all ſet together by the ears, while he gets good fare and is rewarded all the way round; yet all this is truly dramatic as well as the cataſtrophe, gradually relieving their fears by the recovery of the needle, which is found ſticking in the breeches, to the great annoyance of HODGE, who in putting them on feels a painful proof of the fact.

As to the play itſelf, I ſhould conceive it to be a burleſque of the Roman dramatiſts, and particularly of PLAUTUS and TERENCE, for it has all the balderdaſh of the firſt and the regularity of the laſt. It is as indecent, as vulgar, and licentious as the one, and as dull, as inſipid, and ſtupid as the other; in which caſe, taking the drift of it, the biſhop deſerves praiſe inſtead of cenſure; for nothing can be more correctly attended to than are the unities; and who knows but by this ſcrupulous care, ARISTOTLE and HORACE might not have been marked as the objects of his ridicule as well

as PLAUTUS and TERENCE. We at this moment have forgot to reliſh the admirable humour of the *Rehearſal*, even though every man of reading knows ſomething of the crude yet valuable plays of DRYDEN. How then ſhall we be able to judge of the merits of a play at ſuch a diſtance of time which we acknowledge to be perfect in requiſites that ſome think of an equal value to all the reſt*.

* I mean nothing more in this than to reconcile the jarring opinions of different authors, ſome of whom think nothing valuable that is not ancient, and others that is not modern. It is as ridiculous to value a coin for its ruſt as it is to overlook that hiſtorical intelligence it may happen to convey. All extremes are contemptible. Prudent reaſoners will think thus: Great and enlightened writers have ſtarted in all ages and in all nations, and though literary productions, which, by the bye, are not always works of genius, were not multiplied to ſuch a degree, or ſo cut out and conſtructed by ſquare and rule before printing was invented as they have been ſince, yet it does not at all imply that letters begat poetry but rather that genius begat letters. What ſhall we ſay to oral tradition which has tranſmitted from age to age thoſe many ſublime and exquiſite ideas, invented, or rather imbibed by poets, who could not read, which modern writers and thoſe celebrated for erudition have been obliged to adopt. We know by this that the meaſure of invention was full before the regulations of literature were agreed upon. At the ſame time we know that when nature is left to herſelf, her productions, however luxuriant, are not ſo beautiful, nor ſo vigorous as when ſkilfully pruned, arranged, innoculated, and grafted; but it muſt, indeed, be with ſkill that this is attempted, otherwiſe deſtruction would be the conſequence inſtead of preſervation; and after all it muſt be remembered, that, though cultivation may improve nature, without the productions of nature there could be no cultivation at all. Wiſe men, therefore, though they laudably encourage every attempt to

As to the play in queſtion it is worthy of but very little contention, nor is it eaſy to be accounted for, why ſo much notice ſhould have been taken of it by a variety of authors, or how it met with ſucceſs to the degree which they have aſſerted, unleſs, being in the light of an oppoſition to the interludes, it was conſidered as an innovation; a circumſtance always eagerly caught at in the theatrical ſtate.

That there were ſeveral plays before *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, however, admits of very little doubt. We have an account of a tragedy called *Matilda*, which was performed before HENRY the ſeventh, ſixty years at leaſt earlier than that comedy. The *Andria* of TERENCE, a flat inſipid piece, *Hycke Scorner*, which ſeems to be ſomething like a perſonification of CHAUCER's *Canterbury Tales*, and contains a whimſical and humourous diſplay of the vices and follies of the age, interſperſed with moral reflections, and indeed if it were properly divided and digeſted would rank well in the liſts of the drama; *Thyeſtes*, *Hercules Furens*, and *Troas*, tranſlated from SENECA by JASPER HEYWOOD, *Jack Jugler*, a ſtrange heterogeneous attempt at a co-

---

poliſh the beauty and bring out the luſtre of poetry, will always chuſe that ſimplicity which brings nature home to the heart, rather than ſee it rounded by a period, or dreſſed in an idiom.

medy, and ſeveral others, were written before the date which *Gammer Gurton's Needle* bears.

The comedy of *Piſcator; or the Fiſher caught*, written by HOKER, who we are told was a man of fancy and learning, a rhetorician and a poet, alſo came much earlier; ſo did lord MORLEY's tragedies and comedies, which ſeem to have been tranſlations from the ancients, and indeed many more; ſome of which rank in no determinate claſs, not being regular plays but rather ſomething generally dramatic.

At the beginning of the ſixteenth century, however, many plays of various deſcriptions were performed; and, among the reſt, I find, from HOLLINGSHED and other authors, one of which is RICCOBONI, who ſeems to have picked up good theatrical intelligence, that, on the ſeventh of May, 1520, the king cauſed a maſquerade to be prepared, and ordered a ſtage to be raiſed in the great hall at GREENWICH, and the king, the queen, and the nobility came there to the repreſentation of a good comedy of PLAUTUS.

This might have been one of the foregoing plays, for, as the Engliſh ſeemed to emulate the Romans in their courage and their various ſtruggles for freedom,

ſo did they in their poetry, witneſs their admiration of MARTIAL in that poets life time; and thoſe plays were the greateſt part of them tranſlations, the comedies from PLAUTUS and TERENCE, and the tragedies always from SENECA, the pomp of whoſe ſtyle ſeems in all countries to have captivated the early writers.

Yet with all theſe advantages nothing worthy mentioning, except for the purpoſe of exciting the curioſity of the reader, and filling up chronology, can be found before SHAKESPEAR. As, however, when I come to that memorable era, I ſhall have facts enough to bear me out without having any further recourſe to conjectures, it may not be unintereſting to piece out this volume with ſuch circumſtances relative to theſe ancient plays and their writers as may ſerve not only to corroborate paſt obſervation, but alſo to elucidate future enquiry.

Sir JAMES LINDSAY, who we are told firſt introduced plays into SCOTLAND, is ſaid by ſeveral authors to have written tragedies and comedies. He was born late in the fifteenth century. He was honourably employed at the court of JAMES the fifth of SCOTLAND, but his dramatic writings were ſo ſharp and ſo pointed againſt the licentiouſ-

neſs of the court and the corruption of the clergy, that he was not only ſtript of all his emoluments, except the place of Lion King at Arms, which was conferred on him for life, but it is wonderful, ſays an old author, "that he eſcaped their bloody hands who "were ſo ſkilful and had ſuch power at that time "to ſhed the blood of honeſt men and martyrs."

This author ſeems to have been an imitator of ARISTOPHANES. His humour was cutting and ſevere, as well as droll and ludicrous; and his repreſentation of the perſon held up to ridicule was ſo like that it was inſtantly known for ſome profligate courtier or corrupt prieſt. The abbot of PAISLEY, who was ſucceſsfully ridiculed in this manner, complained of him to his patron, the earl of ARRON. He, not being powerful enough to reſiſt the influence of the prieſt, gave up LINDSAY, who, at length, in diſguſt retired to his paternal eſtate and ſought there that tranquility, as a philoſopher, which had been denied to him in the world as a courtier and a poet.

JASPER HEYWOOD, who has been already mentioned as the tranſlator of three tragedies from SENECA, was ſon to the famous HEYWOOD the interlude writer. JASPER ſeems to have been as ſtrange a character as his father. He ſtudied at

MERTON college; where, having been guilty of many unpardonable irregularities, he reſigned his gown to avoid a ſentence of expulſion. After this he entered into the ſociety of Jeſuits at St. OMERS. There he ſtudied for two years and then found himſelf ſo qualified for diſputation, that he did not ceaſe for ſeventeen years to promulgate his controverſies in SWITZERLAND; when, for his love of the mother church and his zeal againſt the heretics, he was elevated to the degree of Doctor in Divinity, and the Four Vows.

Pope GREGORY the thirteenth, in 1581, ſent him at the head of the Jeſuits to ENGLAND; but his intolerable arrogance and pride, in which he affected the imperious conſequence of WOLSEY, running into luxury and magnificence more than his means could allow, ſoon rendered him obnoxious to the court of ELIZABETH; and, perhaps, it is owing to this that he is reported to have been executed in her reign. The fact however is, that when ſome of the Jeſuits were condemned, and the reſt in danger of the law, ELIZABETH, out of humanity, ordered them all to be ſhipped away and ſent out of ENGLAND. HEYWOOD went firſt to ROME and then to NAPLES, where he became acquainted with JOHN PITSEUS, a zealous and bi-

goted catholic, who ſpeaks of him in the higheſt terms of reſpect and admiration.

Of THOMAS SACKVILLE, lord DORSET, it may not be unentertaining to relate ſome particulars. He is ſaid, in conjunction with NORTON, of whom I ſhall preſently ſpeak, to have written what is called the firſt Engliſh tragedy. SACKVILLE was a ſtudent of both Univerſities, entered of the Temple, and early called to the Bar. His deportment was ſo manly, his manners ſo engaging, and his wit ſo lively, that he was ſoon conſidered as an acquiſition to the ſtate. His father brought him into parliament, at whoſe death he took poſſeſſion of a very ſplendid inheritance.

Soon after this he was knighted, and immediately promoted to a peerage by the title of baron BUCKHURST. Determined to keep up all the conſequence attached to his new dignity, he launched into ſuch magnificence and profuſion that, notwithſtanding his immenſe fortune, he very ſoon ſuffered material inconvenience, but the tide of preferment followed on him ſo faſt that he was quickly enabled to look above his difficulties. In 1573, the queen ſent him ambaſſador to CHARLES the ninth, to congratulate that prince on his marriage with the daughter of

MAXIMILIAN, and on other ſtate affairs*. At the court of FRANCE he was received with all the honours due to his own merit and the dignity of his ſovereign.

It ſhould ſeem that ELIZABETH made uſe of BUCKHURST to play off, firſt LEICESTER and afterwards ESSEX; for he was ſent ambaſſador to the States General to accommodate ſome differences that had ariſen in conſequence of certain conduct in the earl of LEICESTER, at which they had thought proper to take umbrage. In this commiſſion he

* As this was juſt after the maſſacre of the Huguenots on the feaſt of St. BARTHOLOMEW; it is more than probable that thoſe other ſtate affairs were ſome prudent conditions for the future ſafety of the Proteſtants. Some have argued the very reverſe, but this we cannot eaſily believe of ELIZABETH. She had the higheſt opinion of BUCKHURST as a man of uncommon penetration and ſteadineſs. He was generally ſelected out as a proper perſon, being a man of profound wiſdom, to be conſulted in all affairs of life and death. He was one of thoſe, being then in the privy council, who ſat on the trial of THOMAS HOWARD, duke of NORFOLK, which lord was executed for being concerned in a plot to recover the liberty of MARY, Queen of Scots. He was alſo named one of the commiſſioners for the trial of that unhappy queen; and, though he was not preſent at her condemnation at FOTHERINGAY CASTLE, yet, after her ſentence was confirmed, ELIZABETH made choice of him as a perſon of the moſt inſinuating addreſs in her court, and one ſhould think of the leaſt feeling, to reconcile her to her hard fate, and to ſee the decree put in execution.

acquitted himſelf with great honour and rectitude. There was ſomething in it, however, which provoked the reſentment of lord BURLEIGH, whoſe influence was at that time ſo great with the queen that BUCKHURST was recalled and confined to his houſe for nine months*. On LEICESTER's death, however, his intereſt at court was renewed to ſuch a degree that BURLEIGH, who, perhaps, feared to appear his enemy, feigned to become his friend. He was made Knight of the Garter, ſat on the trial of the earl of ARUNDEL, and joined BURLEIGH in negociating a peace with SPAIN, which produced the renewal of a treaty with the States General; which, BURLEIGH having fallen ſick, BUCKHURST had all the honour of concluding; and which, as it eaſed the queen of an expence amounting to a hundred and twenty thouſand a year, a large ſum at that time, brought him of courſe into very great favour.

* This circumſtance may ſerve for a leſſon to courtiers who blindly follow the reſentment of their employers. BUCKHURST gave neither ſatisfaction to ELIZABETH nor BURLEIGH. The queen, though ſhe ſent him under a colour of juſtice to rectify theſe miſtakes, rather than vindicate the offender, did not mean that he ſhould act ſo as to irritate her favourite; and BURLEIGH, though he was glad enough to ſee BUCKHURST employed in order to keep down the influence of LEICESTER, grew, however jealous of his ſplendid abilities, and, therefore, prevailed on the queen to connive at injuſtice rather than give him an opportunity of getting the upper hand.

In 1591, he was, at the particular inſtance of the queen, elected Chancellor of the Univerſity of OXFORD, in expreſs oppoſition to her favourite the earl of ESSEX; and, on BURLEIGH's death, ſhe conſtituted him lord high treaſurer. In the following year he was joined in a commiſſion with ſir THOMAS EGERTON, and lord ESSEX, to negociate with the Senate of DENMARK; and when ESSEX libelled the queen, as to her conduct concerning IRELAND, when the miſguided SOUTHAMPTON, fuller of friendſhip and intemperate zeal than prudence and reaſon, joined that unhappy favourite, BUCKHURST was appointed lord high ſteward upon the occaſion.

JAMES, who before his arrival in ENGLAND had heard a great deal of the honeſt ſervices and ſplendid abilities of lord BUCKHURST, ſcarcely mounted the throne when he renewed that nobleman's patent of lord high treaſurer. In the following year he created him earl of DORSET, and appointed him one of the commiſſioners for executing the office of earl MARSHAL, which, however, he did not long enjoy, for he died ſuddenly as he was ſitting at the council table at WHITEHALL, on the 19th of April, 1608, aged ſeventy-two.

As the annals of this country have ſpoken largely of the character of this nobleman, both as a man and a ſtateſman, in which capacities he ſeems to have conducted himſelf moſt honourably, I ſhall ſpeak no further of him than as a dramatic author, a diſtinction equally reputable to him and to the theatre; for it is a remarkable proof of his good ſenſe, in the midſt of his great variety of important avocations, to conſider the ſtage as an object worthy his attention, and it is a high compliment to the ſtage that it received ſuch early improvement from a man of ſuch ſplendid abilities.

The play of *Gorboduc*, written by SACKVILLE in conjunction with NORTON, which is ſaid to be the firſt Engliſh tragedy, or more properly the firſt regular Engliſh tragedy, is taken from hiſtory and highly ſpoken of by ſeveral authors; out of all which praiſe, however, I ſhall content myſelf with ſelecting the words of ſir PHILIP SIDNEY. "It "is," ſays he, "full of ſtately ſpeeches, well found-"ing phraſes, climbing to the height of SENECA's "ſtyle, and as full of notable morality, which it "doth moſt delightfully teach, and ſo obtain the "very end of poetry."

NORTON, who is ſaid to have written the three

firſt acts of *Gorboduc*, was after all, very likely, only the amanuenſis of SACKVILLE. He was counſel to the Stationer's Company, and received the fees for ſuch literary works as were entered on their books; and, happening to have been a ſtudent with SACKVILLE, was probably aſſiſted in life by that nobleman. His own writings appear to have been not at all dramatic, for he was a ſort of enthuſiaſt. He tranſlated religious pieces from the latin, and being a cotemporary of STERNHOLD, and HOPKINS, and intimate with them, he aſſiſted thoſe notable poets in their curious verſion of the Pſalms. We are told that NORTON wrote twenty-ſeven of them himſelf, and that his initials are prefixed to them; if ſo, the reader may eaſily be ſatisfied as to his poetical abilities.

THOMAS PRESTON wrote a piece called *Cambyſes, King of Perſia*, which would have been but little known had it not been for the notice taken of it and its author by more celebrated men than PRESTON, who was, according to report, a much better actor than a poet. He performed ſo well in a play called *Dido*, written by RITWISE, before ELIZABETH in 1564, when ſhe was entertained at CAMBRIDGE; that, as a teſtimony of her appro-

bation, she settled a pension on him of twenty pounds a year*.

Richard Edwards, who was born in 1523, who ran very rapidly through a variety of studies, and was early made Master of Arts at Oxford, was one of the gentlemen of queen Elizabeth's chapel, and teacher of music to the children of the choir. We are told that he had a patent as manager of a theatre royal in that reign. He was certainly very highly in favour with the queen, who constantly attended and very much admired his productions; of which the pieces known to us are, *Damon and Pythias*, and *Palamon and Arcyte*, both of which subjects are familiar to every reader, and shew evidently how much, as we have seen before,

* This man is supposed to have been an object of envy to Shakespear: a most strange and improbable conjecture. Shakespear is said to have ridiculed the circumstance of this annuity in his *Midsummer's Night's Dream*; and, in *Henry the Fourth*, to have laughed at Preston's play where he makes Falstaff talk of "King Cambyses vien." The latter tour of pleasantry is natural enough, but there is nothing of envy in it; and, as to the annuity, as it was conferred in the very year that Shakespear was born, he could neither envy it nor will he be supposed of being such a bungler at his profession, or so ungrateful as to ridicule the queen for a benefit she had conferred on another thirty years before, when, at the very time he is supposed to have written this ridicule, she was heaping favours on him.

that CHAUCER and the other old poets have contributed to the celebrity of the theatre.

Damon and Pythias, one of the moſt affecting and beautiful ſtories of antiquity, is, conſidering the time, very dramatically treated by EDWARDS, but *Palamon and Arcyte*, taken avowedly from CHAUCER's *Knight's Tale*, was the greateſt favourite with the court. After the firſt repreſentation of this piece, the queen ſummoned the poet into her preſence and paid him very handſome compliments. She remarked that PALAMON was ſo juſtly drawn as a lover, that he muſt have been in love indeed. That ARCYTE was a right martial knight, having a ſwart and manly countenance, yet with the aſpect of a VENUS clad in armour; that the lovely EMILIA was a virgin of uncorrupted purity and unblemiſhed ſimplicity; and that, although ſhe ſung ſo ſweetly, and gathered flowers alone in the garden, ſhe preſerved her chaſtity undeflowered. EMILIA was the only female part in the play. It was performed by a boy of fourteen years old, the ſon of the dean of Chriſtchurch, dreſſed like a princeſs, and the queen was ſo charmed with him that ſhe preſented him with eight guineas. The reputation of EDWARDS was certainly very high during his life which terminated the very year in which he produced with ſo much ſucceſs *Palamon and Arcyte*.

GEORGE PEELE, a moſt excentric character, was on one account or another very celebrated early in ELIZABETH'S reign. He took the degree of Maſter of Arts at OXFORD, and afterwards became in LONDON the city poet, and had the ordering of the pageants. He is ſpoken of as a very voluminous dramatic writer, and we are told that his works not only ſucceeded very greatly in his life but that they were read with great pleaſure after his death. He is ſaid in particular to have been a good paſtoral poet. Upon the whole, however, as it is too frequently the caſe, he ſeems to have derived his reputation more from having been the object of patronage to a nobleman, than to the muſes, for his merry pranks in which he is claſſed with SCOGGAN, SKELTON, and DICK TARLETON, all *bon vivants*, with whom the earl of NORTHUMBERLAND, in imitation of ANTHONY with the Roman actors, very often condeſcended to get drunk, lifted him into a degree of public opinion, which his works do not by any means appear to bear out. In ſhort his profligate manners and irregular life but little qualified him for a knowledge of that novelty indiſpenſibly neceſſary in the compoſition of a real dramatic entertainment; and it is, therefore, though one of his plays has been ignorantly attributed to SHAKESPEAR, that the licentious GEORGE PEELE, like his imitators, ROCHESTER and KILLIGREW, is little

known but by his jeſts, "which," an author ſays, "in literature, may be compared to the tricks of "a ſharper in ſociety, for they are falſe, ſpecious "and impoſing."

LILLY was in his time ſo noted a character, for peculiarity is always ſure to be notorious, that he has an indiſpenſible right to be mentioned here. He ſeems as if he had ſet out, not only with a view to reform the ſtage, but the Engliſh language; which, however, he miſerably injured by ſubſtituting quaintneſs for ſimplicity, and bombaſt for wit. His aim was to become maſter of the revels that through the medium of the ſtage he might promulgate his meditated innovation. He miſſed it, however, for queen ELIZABETH did not chuſe to give him that poſt; but this did not deter him, for knowing well the affectation of courts, and being a man of conſummate perſeverence, he ſet himſelf up as a reformer of the Engliſh language under an idea of weeding it of obſolete and uncooth expreſſions; in which taſk he ſo well ſucceeded, that it was as unfaſhionable, for a time, in the court of ELIZABETH to be ignorant of LILLY's *Euphuiſme*, as it was called, as it would be now to be ignorant of the French language *.

* We have ſeen many inſtances where ſingularity has been ſo cheriſhed for excellence that authors have made fortunes when they

LILLY wrote nine plays, which have all a ſmack of *Euphuiſm*, and were therefore celebrated for their day, for they were all *Ephemerons*. He is, nevertheleſs, highly extolled by ſome writers as a paragon of

---

themſelves only expected to excite curioſity, and when they actually merited public indignation. As to Mr. LILLY and his anatomy of wit, which he diſtinguiſhed by the title of *Euphues and his England*, he ſeems ſucceſsfully to have laughed at the people he pretended to to inſtruct. This ſtupid and extravagant romance was a quaint and an affected imitation of oriental poetry; which, by a ſubſtitution of exotic phraſes in the place of vernacular expreſſions, deprived the Engliſh language of all its ſimplicity to ſtuff it with every thing that was unnatural. It was like plucking up daiſies to plant tube-roſes. In ſhort he was a ſhallow writer but a keen penetrator, and knew how to make up with art and cunning for the deficiencies of nature and genius. An inſtance or two will ſhew that, however LILLY was ignorant as to blowing the roſes of language in June, he managed pretty well to preſerve a faint reſemblance of them at Chriſtmas, which is a more extraordinary thing.

Speaking of love he ſays, "There muſt in every triangle be "three lines. The firſt beginneth, the ſecond augmenteth the third "concludeth it a figure: ſo in love three virtues; affection, which "draweth the heart; ſecrecy, which encreaſeth the hope; conſtancy, "which finiſheth the work: Without any of theſe rules there can "be no triangle; without any of theſe virtues, no love." In another place we find this paſſage. "Fire cannot be hidden in "the flax without ſmoke, nor muſk in the boſom without ſmell, "nor love in the heart without ſuſpicion." To examine this madneſs would be to imitate it. It anſwered the author's purpoſe; for whatever his merits were as to erudition he had read enough to know that affectation would be ſure to ſucceed at court; and, though we cannot compliment him on having derived his ſucceſs from his genius, we cannot refrain from giving him ſome degree of praiſe for conciliating that credulity he ſucceſsfully laughed at.

literature. BLOUNT calls him "the only rare poet "of that time," which obſervation, as ſome of his plays were ſtarted againſt ſome of SHAKESPEAR's, will no doubt be univerſally credited. "The witty, "comical, facetiouſly-quick and unparalleled JOHN "LILLY." And in another place maſter BLOUNT tells us, inſpired no doubt with beauties of *Euphuiſm*, "that he ſate at APOLLO's table; that APOLLO "gave him a wreath of his own bays without ſnatch-"ing; and that the lyre he played on had no bor-"rowed ſtrings." Thus LILLY, who paſſed that for wit which he knew to be ſtupidity, like a bouncer who at laſt believes his own lies, was flattered, by the ſame quaintneſs, the ſame baſe coin he had impoſed upon others, into a belief of that merit to which truth and nature vainly laboured to convince him he was an utter ſtranger.

ROBERT GREEN, would have been conſidered as an author of merit and held in ſome eſteem had he not, in company with GEORGE PEELE, and the ſet already mentioned, plunged himſelf into every ſpecies of profligacy and debauchery; leaving a good and beautiful wife to laviſh her ſubſtance on libertines and proſtitutes. We are told that he is the firſt Engliſh poet who wrote for bread; having been obliged, whenever his extravagance threw him to diſtreſs, to have recourſe to his pen for ſubſiſtence.

This induced him moſt ſhamefully to proſtitute his genius; for, knowing that thoſe writings would be ſureſt to ſell beſt which were the moſt obſcene, he gratified the rakes of that age by every ſpecies of licentious poetry till he obtained by theſe worthy labours a conſiderable income. Penury, however, diſeaſe, the indignation of good men, and a conſciouſneſs of his own infamy, led him into a gradual termination of his miſerable and profligate life, which after all finiſhed as it had began; for, a voluptuary to the laſt, he died by over-eating himſelf.

Some affirm that he died a penitent, and inſtance, to prove this aſſertion, his having written a letter full of contrition to his injured wife, and alſo two or three publications of the ſame complexion. The manner of his death, however, the hypocriſy contained in his recantations, and above all, his total forgetfulneſs of his wife's diſtreſs till he was in the moſt abject diſtreſs himſelf, are pretty plain proofs that his profligacy was innate and impoſſible to be eradicated; and that, in proportion as diſeaſe impaired the vigour of his mind, he covered the principles of a libertine with the meanneſs of a ſycophant, and the diſſimulation of a hypocrite.

Green wrote four plays, and was concerned in ſeveral others, all which evince a mind which, had

it been rightly turned, would have lent conſiderable aſſiſtance to the cauſe of literature.

Sir PHILIP SIDNEY, whoſe writings, public conduct, and remarkable fortunes, very peculiarly diſtinguiſhed him, demands to be noticed in this place. He was born in 1554. He was elegantly educated, and very early ſent on his travels. When he was but eighteen, he narrowly eſcaped aſſaſſination at PARIS during the maſſacre of the huguenots; at twenty-two he was ſent on an embaſſy to RANDOLPH, emperor of GERMANY, from which time he took an active and very often a reſolute part as a vigilant ſtateſman. He oppoſed the queen's marriage with the duke of ANJOU, as it is ſuppoſed at the inſtance of his uncle the earl of LEICESTER. The queen, however, appears not to have been very well pleaſed; for, upon ſome frivolous, though violent quarrel which he had with VERE, earl of OXFORD, he was conſtrained to retire from court.

He was ſoon, however, recalled, for in 1580 he was knighted; and, immediately bringing his abilities into action, he projected an expedition with ſir FRANCIS DRAKE againſt AMERICA, but was again reſtrained by the queen. She, however, made him governor of FLUSHING, which had then been juſt

put into her poſſeſſion as one of the cautionary towns, and general of horſe.

After this ſir PHILIP was permitted to purſue his career unreſtrained; for in July, 1586, he ſurprized AXIL, and, by his enterprizing and ſpirited conduct preſerved the lives and the honour of the the Engliſh army at GRAVELINE. From theſe he aſpired to other ſplendid and valorous atchievements, till his fame was ſo great, and ſo univerſal, that he was put in election for the kingdom of POLAND, which it is ſuppoſed he would have carried but for the interference of the queen, who ſaid "ſhe "admired his emulation but could not conſent to "loſe his ſervices."

What could be the radical cauſe of ELIZABETH's ſtrange conduct in relation to this extraordinary man, one moment advancing his fortune the next repelling it, is one of thoſe ſtate ſecrets to which different authors give different motives, but are ſeldom able to come at the truth. SIDNEY being the nephew of LEICESTER, it is very natural to ſuppoſe that he partook of the ſmiles and frowns with which, according to circumſtances, the queen favoured or threatened the uncle. All we certainly know is that her's was a ſort of an April kindneſs, and that it was ſometimes her cuſtom to lour and

ſometimes to ſhine upon her favourites; for, though ſhe loudly lamented the death of SIDNEY, when covered with glory he gallantly fell in the flower of his age at the battle of ZUTPHEN, when ſhe was told ſometime after that her favourite ESSEX had atchieved prodigies of valour, ſhe blamed him for his forwardneſs, and cried out to BURLEIGH, "why "we ſhall have him knocked on the head like that "raſh fellow SIDNEY."

The literary works of ſir PHILIP SIDNEY are various, and are allowed to poſſeſs conſiderable merit. His *Arcadia*, by which he has been moſt celebrated, ran though eight editions, though not publiſhed till after his death. Some eſteem his *Apology for Poetry* as his beſt performance, and his defence of his uncle, the earl of LEICESTER, has been ſpoken of as a ſpirited and ſenſible production. He wrote one dramatic piece called *The Lady of May*.

Sir PHILIP SIDNEY has been ſpoken of differently by different authors; but this is eaſily accounted for. He was profeſſedly a Mæcenas, and it is natural that patronage ſhould in great meaſure beget praiſe. This praiſe however beſtowed on the poet has regularly cooled as the man has been forgotten. He is firſt extolled, afterwards praiſed, then

commended, and at laſt abuſed. Of SIDNEY it has been ſaid by a writer near his time, "that he "enjoyed and deſerved the moſt exalted praiſes of "his own age, and would of future ages. That "SPENSER reverenced him, not only as a patron "but as a maſter. That ſo much ſweet nature, ex- "cellent behaviour, well-digeſted learning, rare wit, "courage, breeding, and other additional accom- "pliſhments of converſation never before met in "any one man. That he was a ſtateſman, a ſoldier, "and a ſcholar; but," ſays he, "his pen and his "ſword have rendered him famous enough; for "he died by the one and by the other he'll live "for ever."

This is not an exact mode of biographical celebration, nor indeed is it very correct ſenſe; but it is panegyric which may take leave, ſo it be warm and glowing, to be a little abſurd, under an idea of ſhrouding inaccuracy behind the dazzle of admiration.

The other author I allude to who, I hope, as he allows no poſthumous fame to others has no expectation of any himſelf, ſays of ſir PHILIP SIDNEY, "that accidents of birth, court favour, and "popularity, gild a ſlender portion of merit. He "had great valour, but it was an age of heroes.

" We have," ſays he, " a tedious, lamentable, pe-
" dantic, paſtoral romance, which the patience of a
" young virgin in love cannot wade through; and
" ſome abſurd attempts to fetter Engliſh verſe in
" Roman chains; a proof that this applauded au-
" thor underſtood but little the genius of his own
" language." After going on for ſome time in the
" ſame ſtrain, he finiſhes with ſaying that " he died
" with the raſhneſs of a volunteer, after having
" lived to write with the *ſang froid* of Madmoiſelle
" SCUDERY."

The fact ſeems to be that, like BOLINBROKE, HORACE WALPOLE, and many other noble authors, who, by their own admirable abilities and their liberal encouragement of cotemporary writers in need of their protection, have left behind them a double claim on the gratitude of poſterity, ſir PHILIP SIDNEY was not only, as FALSTAFF ſays, witty himſelf but the cauſe of wit in others.

The writings of authors of this deſcription are in general more the fruits of their leiſure hours, and a relief from arduous avocations, than a regular employment to which their inclination induce them ſolely to attend. The works of SIDNEY are full of genius, beauty, and good ſenſe; and, though they

may not merit ſo warm a eulogium as that beſtowed on him by the firſt author I have quoted, they are conſiderably above that mediocrity into which they are attempted to be lowered by the laſt.

Many more authors ought to be enumerated who, though they produced pieces during the reign of SHAKESPEAR, ſtarted originally before him. Of theſe, however, little more can be noticed than that they aſſiſted in preparing the ſtage for that ſtate of perfection towards which it was then verging but which certainly it would never have attained but for the incomparable and unparalleled talents of our immortal bard. It may not be amiſs, however, to remark that ſome of theſe were men of no mean abilities.

ALEXANDER NEVILL made a very early progreſs in learning, and at ſixteen aſſociated with the celebrated JASPER HEYWOOD in tranſlating the tragedies of SENECA. In this aſſociation, NEWTON, a very learned writer, who was firſt a ſchoolmaſter, and who, through the patronage of ROBERT earl of ESSEX, became beneficed, NUCE, who is ſaid rather to have attempted plays in the manner of SENECA than to have tranſlated SENECA himſelf, STUDLY, who was a ſtudent at CAMBRIDGE, and

afterwards killed at the ſiege of BREDA under the command of prince MAURICE, were all members. Among this fraternity who worked ſeparately as well as in conjunction, almoſt the whole of SENECA's tragedies were rendered into Engliſh, and ſeveral others invented; by which efforts the Engliſh ſtage boaſted, if not the fancy of GREECE, at leaſt the regularity of ROME.

Beſides theſe were FULWELL, who is ſpoken of as an ingenious writer, and who produced one piece called *Like will to like quothe the Devil to the Collier;* LUPTON who wrote a play called *All for Money;* INGELAND, who wrote *The Diſobedient Child;* NASH, who was a companion of GREEN and his diſolute friends, and who but for his profligacy might have ranked well as an author, for he was remarkable for keen and witty ſatire; KYFFIN, who tranſlated one of the comedies of TERENCE, and who was tutor to the children of his patron, lord BUCKHURST; GOLDING, who tranſlated many celebrated works with great reputation; and ſeveral other authors that might be named, beſides anonymous playwrights out of number, whoſe pieces are entered at Stationer's Hall.

Thus out of a very large maſs of materials I

have ſelected ſuch particulars as I conſidered fully adequate to illuſtrate all I have advanced relative to the antiquity of the Engliſh theatre. I ſhall now firſt enquire into the merit of the early actors, and afterwards recapitulate ſuch circumſtances as may be yet neceſſary to go over, in order to give SHAKESPEAR a clear ſtage on his firſt appearance.

CHAP. X.

ACTORS.

To ſpeak of the antiquity of Engliſh acting with a view of ſhewing what it particularly was would be impoſſible, and even to take it up generally would be to leave it in a very indefinite ſtate. We might ſay with great truth that ALFRED, RICHARD, CŒUR DE LION, and many other princes were actors, that the monks, out of all enumeration, were actors, and that the kingdom at different times ſwarmed with actors, who were always correctly of the ſame deſcription, even from the time of the Roman conqueſt to the vagrant act of EDWARD the third.

The particular merits of theſe men, however, will never be known, and ſome may think it not very material that they ſhould; were it poſſible, however, to get at them I ſhould loſe no diligence in the ſearch; for, though it is certainly true that the man who merely utters cannot ſtand the ſame chance of poſthu-

mous fame as the man who writes, yet the obligation was mutual while the actor lived; and I don't ſee why the poet, whoſe works he ſet off, ſhould neglect to celebrate that merit without which he himſelf would never have been celebrated. What pains have been taken to perpetuate the memory of ROSCIUS! Kings, poets, and philoſophers, have written and ſpoken his eulogium. To RICHARD'S being an actor, ENGLAND owed the releaſe of that monarch, and to the adroitneſs of ALFRED in the ſame capacity ſprung the victory over the Danes.

The ſimilarity of the progreſs of acting in ENGLAND and FRANCE has been already noticed. In FRANCE we find no actors celebrated by name till we get at TURLUPIN and his companions introduced by the farces of the Children of Sans Souci; and here, though we find a pretty ſtrong contention between the ſtudents at St. PAUL'S ſchool and the clerks at Clerkenwell, yet till the interludes of HEYWOOD, in which he himſelf, ſir THOMAS MORE, and others aſſiſted, we learn nothing of the particular merits of an actor.

From this time, however, we begin to get pretty well acquainted with them, and find that, either for pleaſure or profit that knot of *bon vivants* which were headed by GREEN, PEELE, and NASH, were

all actors. The moſt conſpicuous in the groupe is TARLETON, whoſe hiſtory contains ſome whimſical particulars. He was brought to town from SHROPSHIRE by one of the ſervants of lord LEICESTER, who found him in a field taking care of his father's ſwine, and was ſo pleaſed with his anſwers that he introduced him to the earl, who aſtoniſhed at the quickneſs of his intellects, brought him to court where he became a ſort of jeſter to the queen.

We are told that there were times when ELIZABETH preferred TARLETON to all her favourites; that the courtiers paid him the greateſt homage, and often employed him to pave the way for their kind reception. "When the queen," ſays an author, "was ſerious, I dare not ſay ſullen, TARLETON "could undumpiſh her at his pleaſure. He told "her more of her faults than moſt of her chaplains, "and cured her of her melancholy better than all "her phyſicians."

TARLETON was an actor at the Bull in Biſhopgate-ſtreet, and performed originally in the play of *Henry the Fifth*, from which SHAKESPEAR is ſuppoſed to have collected the materials for his play under the ſame title. Suppoſing, however, this report to be truth, it could have furniſhed him only with a few hints, for it had neither FLUELLIN,

PISTOL, the HOSTESS, or any of thoſe excellent characters which we know to have been SHAKESPEAR's invention, or rather his imitation from nature.

When ELIZABETH, at the ſolicitation of ſir FRANCIS WALSINGHAM, appointed a dozen players to perform at BARN-ELMS, allowing them wages, and liveries as grooms of the chamber, TARLETON was made a ſort of manager. An old author ſays, "that for the clown's part he never had his equal. Even BEN JOHNSON, who libels actors, could not refrain from applauding TARLETON. Indeed, by all accounts, his humour was of an irreſiſtable kind, I ſuppoſe ſomething like that of WESTON, for we are told that "the ſelf ſame words "ſpoken by another would hardly move a merry "man to ſmile, which uttered by him would force "a ſad ſoul to laughter*."

* "There are many ſtories related of TARLETON, two of which at leaſt appears to be fabrications. Every one knows that RABELAIS, when he had not a ſous in his pocket, contrived to feaſt ſumptuouſly all the way from PROVINCE to PARIS, by wrapping up brickduſt in different papers, and writing on them "Poiſon for the king, "poiſon for the queen, poiſon for the dauphin;" by which ſtratagem he contrived to be conveyed at the expence of the government as a ſtate priſoner. A ſimilar ſtory is trumpt up for TARLETON; who, having run up a large ſcore at an alehouſe in SANDWICH, made a ſervant boy accuſe him as a ſeminary prieſt, and ſo contrived that the officers of juſtice when they came in ſearch of him found

TARLETON for ſome time kept a tavern in Paternoſter Row, and afterwards the ſign of the Tabor in Grace Church Street, where his humour operated as ſuch an attraction that it was common to have his portrait as a ſign *. OLDYS ſays that there was a ſign in the Borough of a man playing on the pipe and tabor with the name of TARLETON written under it, and that this portrait was a copy of a wooden print which was publiſhed at the head of a work called *Tarleton's Jeſts* †.

---

him on his knees croſſing himſelf. Theſe vigilant miniſters of juſtice, fancying they ſhould make a good thing of this diſcovery, paid his reckoning and conveyed him to London; but when he came before FLEETWOOD, the recorder, who knew him and recognized in this trick one of the well known exploits of TARLETON, he not only diſcharged him but courteouſly entertained him in return for his wit. Another time, when he was in a ſtorm and the paſſengers were ordered to throw their moſt cumberſome luggage overboard, he is ſaid to have requeſted that he might throw his wife into the ſea, which poſſibly might have happened, and that is all we can ſay, for it has been a joke for more than two thouſand years. By the way, TARLETON is ſaid to have reaſon for wiſhing to be diſencumbered of his wife, for he was a notorious cuckold; nay, they go ſo far as to ſay that Cuckold's Point was ſo named by a waterman as he one day landed TARLETON at that place.

* In Biſhop HALL's Satires we find theſe words:

"To ſit with TARLETON on an ale poſt's ſign.!"

† Lord OXFORD had a portrait of TARLETON with his tabor and pipe certainly taken from the print in the front of this jeſt book. He is there repreſented in his Clown's dreſs, playing on his pipe with

He wrote one dramatic piece called *The Seven Deadly Sins;* and this appears to have been when tired of his debaucheries, he, like GREEN and NASH, pretended to repent of his irregularities; at which time his wit seems to have dwindled into mere scurrility, for, as he grew debilitated with his excesses, he became sour and sarcastic. None escaped his virulence, not even LEICESTER, and RALIEGH; till, being discarded from court, and growing every day more contemptible in the world's opinion, he died like VOLTAIRE a mixture of imbecility, folly, and irresolution.

SCOGGAN, according to the most probable accounts of him, was a wicked wit. He had none of the humour of TARLETON, the sterling sense of GREEN, the satire of NASH, nor the barefaced ribaldry of PEELE; but he had a cunning that gave him abilities to cope with them all. He would attack every man's darling foible and appear to be his master in his own art, by which means, though always needy, he always got praise, confidence, and a

---

one hand and beating the drum with the other. This print is said to have been so well cut, that a flatness appears upon the nose which was occasioned by a wound he got in parting some dogs and bears. This misfortune he turned into merriment by noticing that it did not affect him, for that he had still sagacity enough to smell a knave from an honest man.

good bellyful. If TARLETON laughed at his paucity of wit, he laughed at TARLETON by making him a cuckold; if GREEN reproached him with his poverty, he took revenge by helping GREEN off with his money; if NASH provoked him by his ſatire he warded off the ſhaft by callous indifference; and if PEELE made him uſeful in the city pageants, he not only feaſted well at his expence, but he ſnacked the fees and pawned the ornaments. Thus his acting was more ſerviceable to him off than on the ſtage, where his abilities are ſaid to have been but mediocre. With the aſſiſtance, however, of thus playing upon his companions, and now and then on their common patron, the earl of NORTHUMBERLAND, SCOGGAN took care, though he got into all their ſcrapes, to keep himſelf clear of the conſequences of them.

Concerning ſome of the other performers of that time I have already ſpoken. PRESTON was very celebrated, ſo was SKELTON, and ſo were many of the company that performed under the direction of EDWARDS*. Indeed as to their particular merits

* The young ſcholars bred up under EDWARDS, are very warmly celebrated as excellent actors. In the play of *Palamon and Arcyte*, I have already noticed the youth who performed the part of the Princeſs, and that he was ſon to the Dean of Chriſt Church, which will ſhew that acting at that time was by no means thought

it is extremely difficult to arrive at any critical knowledge of them. The ſpecimen I have given of TARLETON's celebrity will, however, prove that the profeſſion of an actor was completely known at that time, for nothing can depict the true merit of comic acting better than the teſtimony of the different poets and critics who have particularly ſpoken of their admiration of his talents, a very ſmall part of which admiration I have quoted.

This account, however, will ſerve to ſhew that actors were at that early period very profligate characters; that they debauched the morals of young noblemen and inexperienced youths of every deſcription; and that whatever morality they might diffeminate by their precepts, they cut it up by the roots by their example. This occaſioned thoſe decrees of ELIZABETH which were ſo often alternately enforced and broken, and eſtabliſhed a neceſſity for the moſt vigilant attention on the part of the ſtate leſt what was intended to improve and poliſh public manners ſhould corrupt and diſ-

---

diſgraceful; but we ſhall ſee that not only acting, conſidered as a picture of human manners, but that mimickry was then performed to admiration; for we are told, that in the play in queſtion, a cry of hounds was ſo perfectly acted that the queen and all the court could not credit but that it was real.

grace them. As dramatic amuſements gained ſtrength on the ſide of genius, truth, and morality, the profeſſion of an actor became more reſpectable, till, at length, during the epoch to which we are haſtening, the theatre was ſo firmly eſtabliſhed that it was never ſhaken again till the troubles in the reign of the firſt CHARLES.

CHAP. XI.

A SUMMARY RECAPITULATION, FROM THE DRUIDS TO SHAKESPEAR.

UPON a review of what I have hitherto written on the Engliſh theatre, though many may think the ſubject unimportant before the birth of SHAKESPEAR, yet I cannot repent of having explored a field full of circumſtances material to the elucidation of a popular theme, even at the riſk of being cenſured by cavillers for exciting rather than gratifying curioſity; for, though the intelligence I have been able to offer is too often ſhrouded with doubt and obſcurity, a misfortune, by the bye, conſtantly attendant on every review of lives and actions, yet if it produce no other literary benefit, the national incidents that are naturally interwoven with dramatic narrative muſt inevitably give it ſome intereſt; and, though it is not to be expected that rational men ſhould value this or any other theme merely for its antiquity, yet, the more rational the

man, the more he will be induced to allow that the ſanction of ages will confirm and eſtabliſh the importance of every thing avowedly and meritoriouſly conſtituted for the inſtruction and delight of the world, and the medium and criterion for the regulation of its manners.

If all I have collected of the bards with the Druids at their head, and have thereby ſhewn that every thing lyric is in its eſſence dramatic, is important, I have gained my end. It were in vain to argue that it is not to be credited becauſe it is conjectural. Conjecture from deduction ſwells into reaſon, and reaſon upon ſuch ground grows into truth. If, therefore, the Druids exiſted, if the Welch bards exiſted, if OSSIAN led on the Scotch bards, or imitated what in his infancy he had imbibed from oral tradition, or even if he had never written, but on the contrary, if all that is attributed to him was gathered from Scotch elders and nurſes, who, though perfect in the beauties of that poetry they ſung, the oldeſt of them had not the remoteſt clue to its origin, yet the whole is a maſs of ſuch fair probability that no ſophiſtry can ſhake it; and, therefore, the taſk, if novel is worthy curioſity, if probable is entitled to attention, and if intereſting will be conſidered as meritorious.

If the Mimes of the Romans came over with JULIUS CÆSAR, and that they did, I do not see the smallest reason to doubt, ENGLAND must decidedly have then known the dramatic art, or else PACUVIUS, ACCIUS, and LIVIUS ANDRONICUS were ignorant of it. BOADICEA tells us it did, nay, indeed, so does MARTIAL, so that we have both English and Roman authority for it.

After the Romans, the chain is so regular from ARTHUR to ALFRED, and so on through the dominion of the Saxons, that in the celebration of great actions, carousals, tournaments, and other feasts, we clearly lead the provincial poets, the drift of all whose writings was dramatic. These the rulers, and principal personages of the land, took a delight in encouraging. Public rites, exercises, and amusements, all received the sanction and countenance of the great, and were considered of so much advantage to manners, that the priests were content, as in all other countries, to imitate the stage in order to enforce the doctrines of the pulpit.

Had the priests never taken the matter up, and they certainly did take it up from St. AUSTIN forwards, the stage most probably would never have been known at all in ENGLAND till SHAKES-

PEAR; for, however, the vivacity and perpetual curioſity of the French might induce them to ſearch for every poſſible minute circumſtance to give pompous accounts of an amuſement in their country, in which they have ſo greatly delighted, the more indolent and incurious ſpirit of Engliſh writers, who are pleaſed more to perform than to celebrate, have, I ſee not why, certainly paſſed it by as a matter of little moment, and thereby loſt to poſterity what made up, and if the remnants of antiquity which have been ſaved from the general wreck may ſtand as a proof, meritoriouſly made up the rational delight of our anceſtors.

But the grand objection will be, that, however I may ſpeak of dramatic entertainments, nothing ought to be conſidered in that light but tragedy and comedy. In this enthuſiaſm in favour of a diſtinction which originally was very indefinite, the one being in GREECE *The Song of the Goat*, and the other *The Song of the Village*, one, therefore, implying a particular event, and the other a general amuſement, we ſet up a diſtinction of our own, and we define tragedy to be a dramatic poem in which ſome ſignal action of illuſtrious perſons is repreſented ending in general fatally*; and the other,

* This definition has ſet the poets together by the ears upon the

which is much nearer the matter, a repreſentation of actions in private life, generally holding up the follies

---

moſt natural ground in the world; becauſe a term, eſtabliſhed from a principle totally different, has, through their filtration of its ſenſe, obtained another meaning. Thoſe who originally invented tragedy, in which was intended nothing more than a hymn in honour of BACCHUS, little dreamt that this word would be uſed to ſignify the great and warlike actions of heroes and legiſlators, and that this commemorating the death of a goat ſhould afterward record the death of emperors. ARISTOTLE, very gravely and with the conſent of his partizans, tells us,, that "tragedy is the imitation of one grave "and entire action of a juſt length," an obſervation that could belong to nobody but ARISTOTLE, "which, without the aſſiſtance of "narration, by raiſing of terror and compaſſion, refines and purges "our paſſions." Now it is ſcarcely poſſible to inſiſt on worſe nonſenſe than this. My author ſays very gravely that this deſinition has thrown the critics into great perplexity; and no great wonder: for "the juſt length, the exiſtence of a tragedy without narration," a a thing which is actually narration in action, and "the terror and "compaſſion which ought alone to be excited by tragedy," is a cruſt for the critics which ARISTOTLE alone knew how to digeſt. Many opinions have been upon this ſubject rendered inexplicable by pedantry; and even CORNEILLE, whoſe mind was rather firm, and whoſe opinion was pretty decided, modeſtly urges "that he "cannot reconcile ARISTOTLE with himſelf; for that his reaſons "defeat his definition." Nay, he even denies the purging of our paſſions to be the end of tragedy. As to the general ſenſe of every definition of comedy it is extremely different to torture it into any thing but its vernacular meaning; but, with all this ſelf evident truth ſtaring him in the face, poor ARISTOTLE chuſes to cavil here; for he will not allow any thing to be comedy but an expoſition of the worſt and loweſt kind of men by way of ridicule. What then becomes of all that ſucceſsful humour by which characters in high life have been laughed at and expoſed? Thoſe who ſhould be our imitation and

of our neighbours to ridicule to deter the ſpectators from imitating abſurdities which theſe pieces expoſe. Therefore we have not invented what was unknown to the ancients, but have merely improved upon their inventions; and in conſequence we have not to brag of having rejected their art and eſtabliſhed one of our own; but that, as the world has become more poliſhed, we have availed ourſelves of an art belonging to them, which we might probably ourſelves have otherwiſe been ignorant of.

Under this idea we are obliged to admit the antiquity of the drama or reject it altogether. Every thing improves as human intelligence grows and expands. This, however, does not alter the original principle. The original principle of the drama was to repreſent manners in action; and, as far as this point was effected, it ever exiſted and never altered nor degenerated, but in obedience to times and circumſtances.

Let us not, therefore, becauſe dramatic pieces were not written in ſome peculiar ſtyle or manner,

---

who degenerate being, ſurely the moſt eligible food for fair criticiſm; what becomes of WYCHERLY, GAY, FARQUAR, VANBURGH, and CIBBER, and what becomes of that very CONGREVE who writes a libel againſt himſelf by ſupporting ARISTOTLE in this ſtrange and inconſiſtent aſſertion.

becauſe they were not divided into acts, becauſe they were not meted by the ſame meaſure, nor poiſed by the ſame weight, deny that there is any diſtinction in the ſpirit of them anciently, and now. ÆSCHYLUS knew what they ought to be, and he knew it in full as great perfection as ARISTOTLE, becauſe ARISTOTLE ſtole all his knowledge from ÆSCHYLUS and his cotemporaries; and, if ÆSCHYLUS, who imitated HOMER, was poſſeſſed of this knowledge, it is folly and ignorance to deny that the dramatic art was known at any period in which men of erudition exiſted.

It is upon this principle I inſiſt that the dramatic art exiſted or was known in this country as early as the Druids, for the Druids ſtudied the Greeks, and who among the Greeks ranked ſo forward as the dramatic poets?

Thus far have I argued in favour of the dramatic art on the ſcore of its antiquity; it muſt be remembered I have not argued on the ſcore of its perfection; but if I had it would not have detracted from the value of my reaſoning; for, ſince SHAKESPEAR, we have ſeen the ſtage degenerate moſt miſerably; and, if I were inclined to inſtance periods when the theatre within the laſt century deſerved no more to be conſidered in a ſtate of per-

fection that it did ſeveral centuries paſt, my obſervations might be thought invidious but they could not be eaſily attached. Nay, were I put to it, I might avail myſelf of arguing that a degenerate fall from the pinnacle on which SHAKESPEAR and his cotemporaries placed it in, is more degrading than the imperfect ſtate in which it is ſuppoſed to have been ſunk before it had the advantage of ſo great and ſo ſhining an example.

If none of theſe arguments will exculpate me from the heavy charge of venturing hiſtorical circumſtances which, though highly probable, I cannot poſitively prove, let me in common with all hiſtorians and biographers claim the privilege of availing myſelf of every thing poſitive and collateral that could poſſibly make out my reaſoning, of joining admitted facts with rational conjecture, of corroborating what we believe with what we know, and of gaining credit for having eſtabliſhed ſome little authenticity on a vague and uncertain, though by no means an unimportant, ſubject, by the aſſiduous and induſtrious care with which it has been explored.

Over and above this, let the collaterally hiſtorical facts which have ſprung from the ſubject, like agreeable objects that cheat the way on a rugged road,

afford ſome amuſement in relief of that jolting which I have given the reader's imagination. I did not profeſs to go on a turnpike road. There are no mile ſtones, the way is not meaſured, it is computed; and, if there were ever any direction poſts, they have been long ago broken down and deſtroyed. It was, nevertheleſs, a road, and we have come ſafely through it; and the few veſtiges that prove it was formerly frequented, though there may not be much beauty and ſymmetry in them, have nevertheleſs an intereſting and a pictureſque effect. An effect like the productions of CLAUDE, whoſe ruins ſeem to aſſume a venerable complacency communicated by the richneſs of the ſetting ſun that ſoberly glows behind them.

By way of companion to this picture, let us turn our eyes to a grey morn full of aerial effect, and giving a cheering promiſe that the ſame ſun which ſet ſo ſerenely ſolemn the evening before, ſhall again diſplay its comforting influence till by a gradual and invigorating encreaſe of power and radiance, it at length gather into a burſt of the moſt dazzling ſplendour.

In this idea we ſhall have a fair reſemblance of the theatre from the time of HEYWOOD and the interludes. The myſteries, and the moralities, hav-

ing gradually declined and, at length, ſunk into oblivion, manners in action began to exhibit a dawn of that day in which the objects of nature were at firſt faintly diſcerned, afterwards more perfectly ſeen, and at laſt acknowledged in all their charms, through the reſplendant genius of SHAKESPEAR.

The chaos into which the dramatic art was then crumbled began to ferment and diſtend itſelf. BUCKHURST aſſiſted the proceſs; ſo, with the help of SENECA, did NASH, NEVILLE, NEWTON, STUDLY, NUCE, and the reſt, who ſeem to have been to JASPER HEYWOOD ſomething like what CHAPLAINE and his worthy companions were to RICHELIEU; the tranſlators of TERENCE made the atoms dance a little more, EDWARDS, by the help of CHAUCER and BOCCACE, began to arrange them, PEELE drilled them as well as he could but he gave them too volatile a motion, LILLY led them forward in a kind of minuet but miſtook diſtortion for grace, PRESTON put them into ſtilts, NORTON made them ſing pſalms, LINDSEY held up a mirror to ſhew them their deformity, SIDNEY made them courtly, and others did what they could to move the monſtrous heap, ſeperate it, and mould it into form*.

* Sir PHILIP SIDNEY ſays, ſpeaking of the ſtage in his time,

Still, however, the work was very imperfect. The rugged and miſhapened fragments, as they took all manner of monſtrous and diſtorted forms, ran about in all directions, exhibiting every appearance but nature. By continual and ſteady perſeverance, however, the artificers that had the work in hand began to mould it into better faſhion; till, at length, to keep up the alluſion, Envy, like the Devil, began to be jealous of this dramatic approach towards order, for we find a book, dedicated to ſir PHILIP SIDNEY, by STEPHEN GOSSON, called *The School of Abuſe, a pleaſant invective againſt Poets, Pipers, Players, Jeſters, and ſuch like Catterpillars of the*

" Our tragedies and comedies obſerve rules neither of honeſt civility,
" or ſkilful poetry. Here you ſhall have ASIA of the one ſide, and
" AFRIC of the other, and ſo many other under kingdoms, that the
" player when he comes in, muſt begin with telling where he is, or
" elſe the tale will not be conceived. Now you ſhall have three la-
" dies walk to gather flowers, and then we muſt believe the ſtage to
" be a garden. By and by we hear news of a ſhipwreck in the ſame
" place, then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. Upon the
" back of that comes out a hideous monſter with fire and ſmoke, and
" then the miſerable beholders are bound to take it for a cave: while
" in the mean time two armies flie in, repreſented with four ſwords
" and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a
" pitched field? Now of time they are much more liberal. For
" ordinarily it is that two young princes fall in love, after many tra-
" verſes the lady is got with child, delivered of a fair boy, he is loſt,
" groweth a man, falleth in love, and is ready to get another child;
" and all this in two hours ſpace: which how abſurd it is in ſenſe,
" even ſenſe may imagine."

Commonwealth; and another called *Plays confuted in five Actions.* This book, which is dedicated to ſir FRANCIS WALSINGHAM, labours very hard to prove that plays are calculated to promote licentiouſneſs and immorality, and, therefore, ought not to be ſuffered in a commonwealth.

Theſe publications begat a long controverſy which was very warmly taken up againſt GOSSON by LODGE and THOMAS HEYWHOD, which laſt, we ſhall hereafter ſee, according to his own report indeed, wrote, or had a hand, or at leaſt a main finger, his own expreſſion, in two hundred plays. At the time, however, of his entering the liſts with GOSSON, he was very young, and it ſerved to help him forward in much the ſame manner, though the circumſtances are not alike, as the diſpute with MOLIERE which brought BOURSAULT into notice. GOSSON was attacked very ſucceſsfully. The diſpute, however, did general ſervice; for, as there was much to expoſe in the conduct of the ſtage and its adherents, ſo the appeal to ſir FRANCIS WALSINGHAM, and ſir PHILIP SIDNEY, ſo far called forth their interference, that they examined the abuſes, and occaſioned them in material points to be rectified.

Thus the labourers in this meritorious work

went on in the moſt ſtrenuous and animated manner, and wrought the better for being watched. If a poet thought he had made a perfect form in a play, a biting and ſevere ſatire convinced him, or at leaſt the world, that it was monſtrous and unnatural. However he might fancy that his ideas were ſublime, and his verſes flowing and eaſy, ſome critic was ſure to poſſeſs the world with an opinion that his ſubject was the bathos, that his ſtyle halted, and that his meaſure limped.

Theſe were, however, good ſymptoms. The warmer the ſunſhine the more the flies are engendered. Crouds of authors begat crouds of critics. Thoſe, therefore, who had written crudely began now to try at writing elegantly. The great difficulty was to ſhape invention, which many of them had, into regularity. To do this they called in the aſſiſtance, as we have ſeen, of SENECA and TERENCE; for, however, in a much earlier period the genius of the Greeks might have pervaded the Engliſh taſte, we ſee no viſible traces of it at this particular time; nor is there any ſolecifm in this. The prieſts knew the Greek poets and moſt carefully choſe them for their models; but this continued no longer than during the continuation of the myſteries; for at the moment the Engliſh authors improved in one hand into plays, they on the other hand miſtook the

road as to conſtruction and ſtyle; and, therefore, followed the unintereſting and phlegmatic Romans inſtead of imitating the great and original Greeks.

In this labyrinth were the poets of that time bewildered, or rather, to keep on with my firſt figure, in this chaos were they overwhelmed and enthralled. Some fancied that the inflated SENECA would open to them all the arcana of tragedy, and others that in the tame TERENCE conſiſted all the merit of comedy. Under this influence they forgot the language in which they wrote, the manners of their countrymen, and the particular ſtyle in which to appeal to their paſſions and their hearts.

Thus the unwieldy maſs they had to move, to concoct, to form, to animate, was too mighty a taſk for their exertions. It remained that the literary glory of GREECE ſhould be born anew in the bard of ENGLAND. It remained for a genius, great, powerful, and commanding, with the majeſty of HOMER, the judgment of ÆSCHYLUS, the ſweetneſs of SOPHOCLES, the philoſophy of EURIPIDES, the wit of ARISTOPHANES, and the truth of MENANDER, to reconcile ſo many jarring opinions and to perfect this chaos into a world.

SHAKESPEAR was this genius; and ſo well by

him were theſe jarring intereſts reconciled, that all the poets with the aſſiſtance of all the critics cannot, up to that time, nor perhaps ſince, except in his own works, find any tragedy and comedy that appeals ſo forcibly to the heart, ſo perfectly ſatisfies the mind, or indeed that ſo completely triumphs over all candid objection, as *Othello*, and *The Merry Wives of Windſor*.

The genius of SHAKESPEAR then was the power that formed this chaos into a world. SHAKESPEAR; who, for his perfecting the dramatic art, deſerves the ineffable reverence of ages; and who, for giving light to the theatrical world, might ſnatch the epitaph from the tomb of NEWTON.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

PN
2101
D54
1800
v.2
c.1
ROBA